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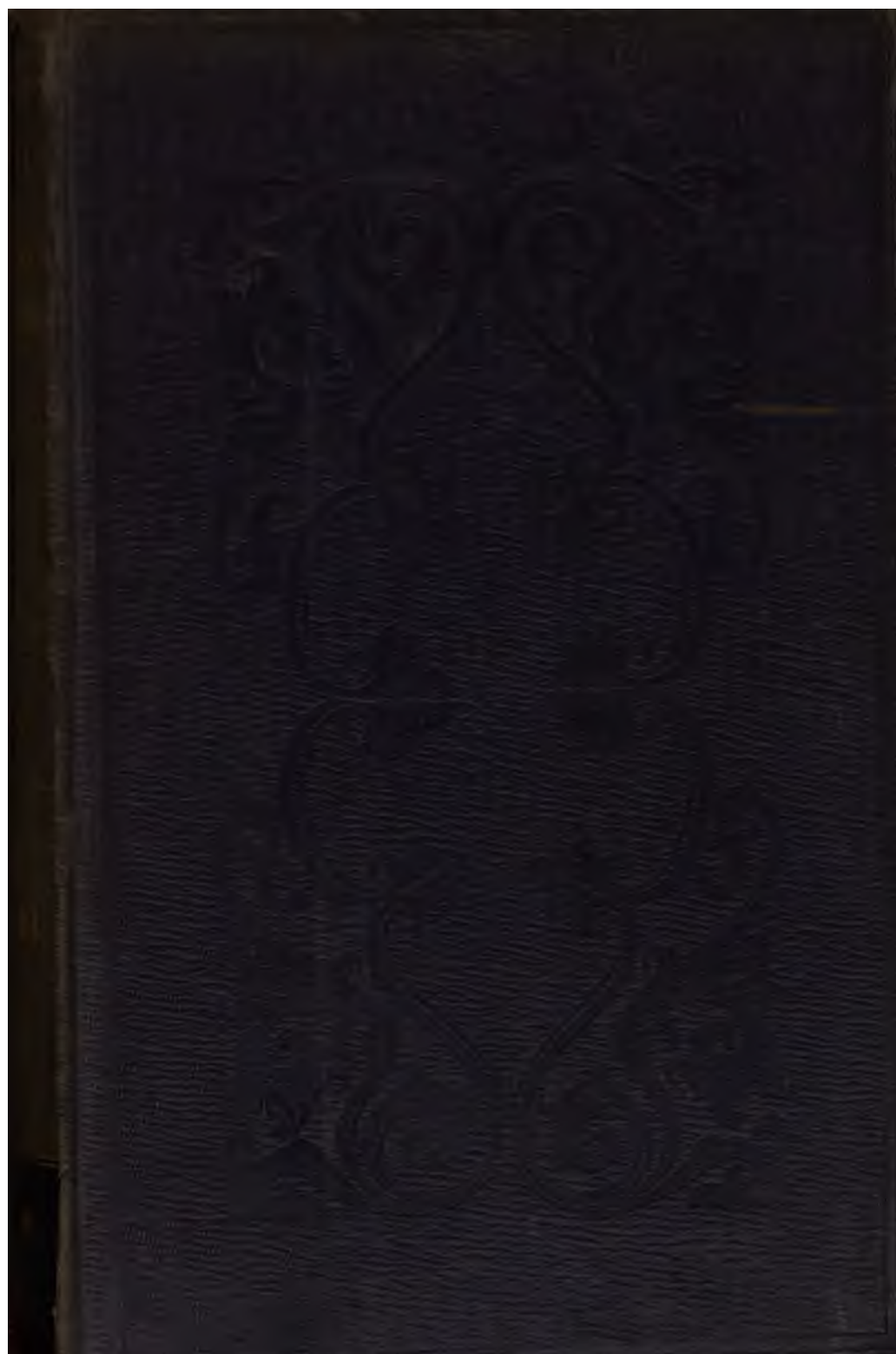
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CHARLES AUCHESTER.

A MEMORIAL.

"Were it not for Music, we might in these days say, the Beautiful is dead."
RT. HON. B. DISRAELI.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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PART II.

The Violin and the Violet.

(CONTINUED.)

CHARLES AUCHESTER.

CHAPTER XII.

THE season came, and I shall never forget its opening. It was late in April, exquisite weather, halcyon, blooming; my memory expands to it now. From Italy he returned. He came upon us suddenly; there was no time to organize a procession, to marshal a welcome chorus; none knew of his arrival until he appeared.

We had been rambling in the woods, Franz and I, and were lounging homewards laden with wild flowers and lily-bunches. Franz was a kind creature to me now, and in my loneliness I sought him always. We heard, even among the moss, a noise of distant shoutings — nobody shouted in

that spot except our own—and we hurried homewards. I was quite faint with expectation, and being very wearied sat down to rest on one of those seats that everywhere invite in shady places, while Delemann sped onwards for information.

Returning, he announced most gleefully, “The Chevalier has arrived; they are drawing the carriage up the hill.” I am ashamed of what I did. I could not return to Cecilia; I wandered about in the village possessed by a vague aspiration that I should see him there, or that he would espy me: no such thing.

I came back to supper, excited, expectant; he was gone. I deserved it, and felt I did, for my cowardice; but at the end of supper the head of the central table, having waited until then, deliberately took from his deep pocket and presented me with a note, a very tiny note, that was none the fresher for having lain an hour or two amidst snuff and “tabac.” But this notelings almost set me raving. It was short indeed, yet honey sweet.

“I am not to find thee here, my Carl, although I came on purpose. Art not thou still my eldest

child? Come to me then, to-morrow, it will be thy Sunday, and thy room shall be ready; also two little friends of thine, I and he. Do not forget me—thine, Seraphael.”

He had made every arrangement for my visit, and I never think of his kindness in these particulars, without being reminded that in proportion to the power of this Genius was it ever beneficently gentle. I spent such an afternoon as would have been cheaply purchased by a whole life of solitude; but I must only advert to one circumstance that distinguished it.

We were walking upon the lovely terrace, amongst bright marbles just arranged, and dazzling flowers; he was gentle, genial, animated—I felt my time was come. I therefore taught myself to say—“Sir, I have a very, most particular favour to ask of you; it is that you will condescend to give me your opinion of a piece of music which some one has written: I have brought it with me on purpose—may I fetch it? it is in my hat in the house.”

“By all means, this very moment, Carlomein—

or no, rather we will go in doors together, and examine it quietly. It is thine own, of course?"

"Oh! no Sir, I should have said so directly. It is a young lady's, and she knows nothing of my bringing it. I stole it from her."

"Ah! true," he replied, simply, and led me to that beautiful music-room. I was fain to realize Maria's dream as I beheld those radiant organ-pipes beneath their glorious arch—that deep-wooded pianoforte, with its keys milk-white and satin-soft, recalling me but to that which was lovelier than her very vision—the lustrous presence pervading that luxury of artistic life. Seraphael was more innocent, more brilliant in behaviour at his home than anywhere; the noble spaces and exquisitely-appointed rooms seemed to affect him merely as secluded warmth affects an exotic flower; he expanded more fully, fragrantly, in the rich repose.

At the cedar writing-table he paused, and stood waiting silently while I fetched the score. As I unfolded it before him, I was even more astonished than ever at the perfection of its ap-

pearance ; I hesitated not the least to place it in those most delicate of all delicate hands. I saw his eyes, that seemed to have drawn into them the very violet of the Italian heaven, so dark they gleamed through the down-let lashes, fasten themselves eagerly for an instant upon the title sheet, where after his own fashion, Maria had written her ancient name "Cerinthia" only, in the corner ; but then he laid the score, having opened the first page, upon the table and knelt down before it, plunging his fingers into the splendid curls of his regal head, his very brow being buried in their shadow as he bent, bowed, leaned into the page, and page after page until the end.

With restless rapidity his hand flashed back the leaves—his eye drank the spirit of those signs ; but he spoke not, stirred not ; it seemed to me that I must not watch him, as I was doing most decidedly ; and I disentangled myself from that reverie with a shock.

I walked to the carved music-stands—the painted music cases. I examined the costly manuscripts and olden tomes arrayed on polished cabinets.

I blinded myself with the sunshine streaming through stained compartments in the windows to the carnation-toned velvet of the furniture—I peered into the pianoforte, and yearned for it to awaken—and rested long and rapturously before a mighty marble likeness of the self-crowned Beethoven. It was garlanded with grapes and vine leaves that fondled the wild locks in grace-fullest fraternity; it was mounted upon a pedestal of granite, where also the alabaster fruits and tendrils clustered, clasping it like frozen summer, and beneath the bust the own investment glittered—

“Tonkunst’s Bacchus.”

It was no longer difficult to pass away the time without being troublesome to myself or Sera-phael. I was lost in a triumphant reminiscence that the stormy brow, the eyes of lightning, the torn heart, the weary soul; were now heaven’s light, heaven’s love, its calm, its gladness. For quite an hour I stood there, so remembering and desiring ever to remember. And then that sweet, that living voice aroused me. Without looking up he said—

"Do you mean to say, Carlomein, that she has had no help here?"

"Sir, she could have had none; it was all and entirely her own. No one knew she had written except myself."

Then in his clearest tones he answered—"It is as I expected. It is terrible, Carlomein, to think that this work might have perished, and I embrace thee, Carlomein, for having secured to me its possession."

"Is it so very good then, Sir? Maria was very ignorant about it, and could not even play it for herself."

"I dare say not, she has made too full a score." He smiled his sweetest smile—"but for all that we will not strike out one note. Why is it not finished, Carlomein?"

I might have related the whole story, from beginning to end, but his manner was very regal just now, and I merely said—"I rather think she was dissatisfied with the first two movements, for although she said she could finish it, she did not, and I have kept it some time."

“ You should have written to me, Carlomein, or sent it to me ; it must and shall be finished. The work is of Heaven’s own. What earthly inspiration could have taught her strains like these ? they are of a priestess and a prophetess—she has soared beyond us all.”

He arose suddenly, a fixed glow was upon his face, his eyes were one solemn glory. He came to the piano, he pushed me gently aside, he took his seat as noiselessly, he began to play. I would not retire—I stood where I could both see and hear. It was the second movement that first arrested him. He gave to the white-faced keys a hundred voices. Tone upon tone was built, the chords grew larger and larger ; no other hand could have so elicited the force, the burden, the breadth of the orchestral medium, from those faint notes and few. His articulating finger supplied all needs of mechanism ; he doubled and redoubled his power.

Never shall I forget it. The measure so long and lingering—the modulations so like his own—the very subject moulded from the chosen key like

sculpture of the most perfect chiselling from a block of the softest grain—so appropriate, so masterly. But what pained me through the loveliness of the conception was to realise the mood suggesting it—a plaint of spiritual suffering, a hungering and thirsting heart, a plea of exhausted sadness.

He felt it too ; for as the weary, yet unreprouched strain fell from under his music-burdened fingers, he drooped his glorious head as a lily in the drenching rain—his lips grew grave, the ecstatic smile was lost, and in his eyes there was a dim expression though they melted not to tears. I was sure that Maria had conserved her dream, for a strange intermittent accompaniment streamed through the loftier appeal, and was as a golden mist over too much piercing brightness.

The movement was very long, and he never spoke all through it, neither when he had played as far as she had written ; but turned back to the first, as yet untried.

Again was I forcibly reminded of what I had said on my first acquaintance with her,—she had,

without servile intention, caught the very spirit of Seraphael as it wandered through his compositions, and imprisoned it in the sympathy of her own. It was as two flowers whose form is single and the same, but the hues were of different distribution, and still his own supreme. I cannot describe the first movement further; I was too young to be astonished, carried away by the miracle of its consummation under such peculiar circumstances; but I can remember how completely I felt I might always trust myself in future when any one should gain such ascendancy over my convictions, which by the way, never happened.

I must not dwell upon that evening; suffice it to say that I left the score with the Chevalier, and though he did not tell me so in so many words, I felt sure he himself would restore it to the writer.

On Monday evening I was very expectant, and not in vain, for she sent me a note of invitation—an attention I had not received from her since my rebellious behaviour. She was alone, and even now writing; she arose hastily, and for some moments could not command her voice; she said

what I shall not repeat, except that she was too generous, as regarded her late distance ; and then she explained what follows.

“ The Chevalier came this morning, and Carl, I could only send for you, because it is you who have done it all for me in spite of my ingratitude, and alas ! I never can repay you. I feel Carl, now, that it is better not to have all one wishes for at once ; if I had not waited the shock would have killed me.”

I looked at her—tried to make out to my sight that she did not, even now, look as if ready to die : —her lips had lost their fever rose, and were pale as the violets that strewed her eyes ; the faint blue threads of veins on the backs of her hands ; the thin polish of those temples standing clear from her darkest hair—these things burned upon my brain, and gave me a sickening thrill. I felt, can Anastase have seen her?—can he have known this ?

I was most of all alarmed at what I myself had done, still I was altogether surprised at the

renewal of my fears, for on the Saturday she had not only seemed, but been herself—her cheeks, her lips, her brow, all wearing the old healthful radiance.

“ Maria!” I exclaimed—“ dear Maria—will you tell me why this symphony makes you ill, or look so ill? You were quite well on Saturday I thought, or you may quite believe I should never have done what I did.”

“ Do I look ill, Carl? I do not feel ill, only desperately excited. I have no headache, and what is better, no heart pain now. Do you know what is to be? I tell you, because you will rejoice that you have done it. This work is to be finished and to be heard. An orchestra will return my dream to God.”

“ Ah! your dream, Maria—I thought of that. But shall *I* hear it, Maria?”

“ You will play for me, Carl—and Florimond. Oh! I must not remember that. And the Chevalier, Carl. He even entreated, the proud soul—the divinely missioned—entreated me to per-

petuate the work. I can write now without fear, he has made me free. I feared myself before, now I only fear him."

"Maria, what of Anastase? Does he know, and what does he think?"

"Do not ask me, Carl, for I cannot tell you what he did. He was foolish, and so was I, but it was for joy on both our parts."

"You cried then? There is nothing to be ashamed of."

"We ought to have restrained ourselves when the Chevalier was by. He must love Florimond now, for he fetched him himself and told him what I had done and was still to do."

It is well for us that time does not stay—not grievous, but a gladsome thought, that all we most dread is carried beyond our reach by its force, and that all we love and long to cherish is but taken that it may remain, beyond us, to ripen in eternity, until we too ripen to rejoin it. Still there is a pain wholly untinctured with pleasure in recalling certain of its shocks, re-living them, returning upon them with memory.

The most glorious of our days, however, strike us with as troubled a reminiscence, so that we ought not to complain, nor to desire other than that the past should rest, as it does, and as alone the dead beside repose—in hope. I have brought myself to the recollection of certain passages in my youth's history, simply because there is nothing more precious than the sympathy, so rare, of Circumstance with Passion—nothing so difficult to describe, yet that we so long to win.

It is seldom that what happens is chance we would have left unchanged could we have passed sentence of our will upon it, but still more unwonted is it to feel, after a lapse of eventful times, that what *has* happened was not only the best, but the only thing to happen, all things considered that have intervened. This I feel now about the saddest lesson I learned in my exuberant boyhood—a lesson I have never forgotten, and can never desire to discharge from my life's remembrance.

Everything prospered with us after the arrangement our friend and lord had made for Maria. I can only say of my impressions that they were of

the utmost perfectibility of human wishes in their accomplishment, for she had indeed nothing left to wish for.

I would fain delineate the singular and touching gratitude she evinced towards Seraphael, but it did not distribute itself in words; I believe she was altogether so much affected by his goodness that she dared not dwell upon it. I saw her constantly between his return and the approaching examinations, but our intercourse was still and silent. I watched her glide from room to room at Cecilia, or found her dark hair sweeping the score at her home, so calmly—she herself calmer than the calmest—calm as Anastase himself. Indeed to him she appeared to have transferred the whole impetuousness of her nature; he was changed also, his kindness to myself warmer than it ever had been, but his brow oppressed, his air of agitation, I deemed him verily most anxious for the result. Maria had not more than a month to work upon the rest of the symphony and to complete it, as Seraphael had resolutely resolved that it should be rehearsed before our summer separation.

Maria I believe would not have listened to such an arrangement from any other lips, and Florimond's dissatisfaction at a premature publicity was such, that the Chevalier,—autocratic even in granting a favour—which he must ever grant in his own way,—had permitted the following order to be observed in anticipation.

After our own morning performance by the pupils only and their respective masters, the hall would be cleared, the audience and members should disperse, and only the strictly required players for the orchestra remain, Seraphael himself having chosen these. Maria was herself to conduct the rehearsal, and those alone whose assistance she would demand had received an intimation of the secret of her authorship. I trembled when the concluding announcement was made to me, for I had a feeling that she could not be kept too quiet; also Anastase, to my manifest appreciation, shared my fear; but Seraphael was irresistible, especially as Maria had assented, had absorbed herself in the contemplation of her in-

tentions, even to eagerness that they should be achieved.

Our orchestra was, though small, brilliant; and in such perfect training as I seldom experience in England. Our own rehearsals were concluded by the week before our concert, and there remained rather less for me to do. Those few days I was inexpressibly wretched, a foreboding drowned my ecstatic hopes in dread; they became a constant effort to maintain, though even everything still smiled around us.

The Tuesday was our concert morning, and on the Sunday that week I met Maria as we came from church. She was sitting in the sunlight, upon one of the graves. Josephine was not near her nor her brother; only Florimond, who was behind me, ran and joined her before I beheld that she beckoned to me. I did hardly like to go forward as they were both together, but he also bade me approach by a very gentle smile. The broad lime-trees shadowed the church, and the blossoms unopened hung over them in ripest bud; it was

one of those oppressively sweet seasons that remind one—at least me—of the resurrection morning.

“Sit down by me Carl,” said Maria, who had taken off her gloves, and was already playing with Florimond’s fingers as if she were quite alone with him, though the churchyard was yet half-filled with people.

“Maria,” I said, sitting down at the foot of a cross that was hung with faded garlands, “why don’t you sit in the shade? it is a very warm day.”

“So it is very warm, and that is what I like; I am never warm enough here, and Florimond too loves the sun. I could not sit under a tree this day, everything is so bright, but nothing can be as bright as I wish it. Carl, I was going to tell Florimond, and I will tell you, that I feel as if I were too glad to bear what is before me. I did not think so until it came so very near. I am afraid when I stand up my heart will fail.”

“Are you frightened, Maria?” I asked in my simplicity.

“That is not it, though I am also frightened.

But I feel as if it were scarcely the thing for me to do, to stand up and control those of whom I am not master. Is it not so, Florimond ?”

“ Maria, the Chevalier is the only judge, and I am certain you will not, as a woman, allow your feelings to get the better of you. I have a great deal more to suffer on your account than you can possibly feel.”

“ I do not see that.”

“ It is so, and should be seen by you. If your work should in any respect fail, imagine what that failure would cost me.”

I looked up in utter indignation, but was disarmed by the expression of his countenance; a vague sadness possessed it, a certain air of tender resignation; his hauteur had melted, though his manner retained its distance.

“ As if it could be a failure !” I exclaimed ;
“ why we already know how much it is !”

“ I do not, Auchester, and I am not unwilling to confess my ignorance. If our symphony even prove worthy of our Cecilia, I shall still be anxious.”

“ Why, Florimond ?” she demanded, wistfully.

“ On account of your health. You know what you promised me.”

“ Not to write for a year. That is easy to say.”

“ But not so easy to do. You make every point an extreme, Maria.”

“ I cannot think what you mean about my health.”

“ You cannot ? ”

She blushed lightly and frowned a shade. “ I have told you, Florimond, how often I have had that pain before.”

“ And you told me also what they said.”

His tones were now so grave that I could not bear to conjecture their significance. He went on :

“ I do not consider, Maria, that for a person of genius it is any hardship to be discouraged from too much effort, especially when the effect will become enhanced by a matured experience.”

“ You are very unkind, Florimond.”

Indeed I thought so too.

“ I only care to please you.”

“ No Maria, you had not a thought of me in writing.”

"And yet you yourself gave me the first idea. But you are right; I wrote without reference to any one, and because I burned to do so."

"And you burn less now for it; tell me that."

"I do not burn any longer, I weary for it to be over; I desire to hear it once, and then you may take it away, and I will never see it any more."

"That is quite as unnatural as the excessive desire, to have fatigued of what you loved. But, Maria, I trust this weariness of yours will not appear before the Chevalier, after all his pains and interest."

"I hope so too, Florimond, but I do not know."

It did not. The next day the Chevalier came over to Cecilia, and slept that night in the village. The tremendous consequence of the next twenty-four hours might almost have erased, as a rolling sea, all identical remembrance, and indeed it has sufficed to leave behind it what is as but a picture once discerned and then for ever darkened. The cool early romance of the wreaths and garlands—for we all rose at dawn to decorate the entrance, the corridors, the hall, the reception-room—the

masses of may-bloom and lilies that arrived with the sun ; the wild beauty overhanging everything, the mysterious freshness, I have mentioned ; or some effects just so conceived, before.

I myself adorned with laurels and lilies the Conductor's desk, and the whole time as much in a dream as ever when asleep ; at all events I could even realise less. Maria was not at hand nor could I see her. She breakfasted alone with Anastase, and although I shall never know what happened between them that morning, I have ever rejoiced that she did so.

When our floral arrangements were perfected I could not even criticise them ; I flew to my bed and sat down upon it, holding my violin, my dearest, in my arms. There I rested, perhaps slept ; strange thoughts were mine in that short time, which seemed immeasurably lengthening. Most like dreams, too, those very thoughts, for they were all rushing to a crisis. I recalled my cue, however, and what that alarming peal of a drum meant, sounding through the avenues of Cecilia.

As we ever cast off things behind, my passion could only hold upon the future. I was but, with all my speed, just in time to fall into procession with the rest. The chorus first singing, the band in the midst, behind our professors in order, and on either side our own dark lines, the female pupils a double streak of white. I have not alluded to our examinations, with which however, I had had little enough to do. But we all pressed forwards in contemporaneous state, and so entered the antechamber of the hall. It was the most purely brilliant scene I ever saw; prepared under the eye of the masters in our universal absence, I could recognise but one taste, but one eye, one hand, in that blending of all deep with all most dazzling flower-tints.

One double garland, a harp in a circle, the symbol of immortal harmony, wrought out of snowy roses and azure ribbons, hung exactly above the table; but the table was itself covered with snowy damask, fold upon fluted fold, so that nothing, whatever lay beneath it, could be given to the gaze.

Through the antechamber to the decorated hall we passed, and then a lapse of music half restored me to myself; only half, despite the overture of his, with choral relief, with intersong, that I had never heard before and that he had written only for us; despite his presence, his conducting charm.

In little more than an hour we returned, pell-mell now, just as we pleased, notwithstanding calls to order and the pulses of the measuring voices. Just then I found myself by Maria. Through that sea-like resonance she whispered—

“Do not be surprised Carl, if the Chevalier presents you with a prize.”

“I have not tried for one, Maria.”

“I know that, but he will nevertheless distinguish you, I am certain of it.”

“I hope not. Keep near me, Maria.”

“Yes surely, if I can; but oh! Carl, I am glad to be near you. Is that a lyre above the table? for I can scarcely see.”

She was, as I expected, pale; not paler than ever; for it was very long since she had been paler than any one I ever saw, except the Cheva-

lier. But his was as the lustre of the whitest glowing fire ; hers was as the light of snow. She was all pale except her eyes, and that strange halo she had never lost shone dim as the darkest violets, a soft yet awful hue. I had replied to her question hurriedly, " Yes ; and it must have taken all the roses in his garden." And last of all, she said to me, in a tone which suggested more suffering than all her air—" I wish I were one of those roses."

The table, when the rich cover was removed, presented a spectacle of fascination scarcely to be appreciated except by those immediately affected. Masses of magnificently bound volumes, painted and carved instrument cases, busts and portraits of the hierarchy of music ; lay together in according contrast. For, as I have not yet mentioned, the Chevalier had carried out his abolition of the badges to the utmost ; there was not a medal to be seen. But these prizes were beyond the worth of any medal, each by each. One after another left the table in those delicate hands, wafted to its for-

tunate possessor by a compliment more delicate still, and I fancied no more remained.

Maria still stood near me, and as the moments flew, a stillness more utter than I could have imagined pervaded her; a marbled quietness crept over every muscle; and as I met her exquisite countenance in profile with the eyes downward and fixed and not an eyelash stirring, she might have been the victim of Despair, or the genius of enraptured Hope.

I saw that the Chevalier had proceeded to toss over and over the flowers which had strewn the gifts—as if it were all, also, over now—and he so long continued to trifle with them, that I felt as if he saw Maria, and desired to attract from her all other eyes, for he talked the whole time lightly, laughingly, with an air of the most ravishing gaiety, to those about him, and to every one except ourselves.

In a few minutes, which appeared to me a very hour, he gathered up with a handful of flowers that he let slip through his fingers directly, something

which he retained in his hand, and which it now struck me that he had concealed, whatever it was, by that flower-play of his all along—for it was even diffidently, certainly with reserve of some kind, that he approached us last, as we stood together and did not stir.

“These,” said he to me, in a voice that just trembled, though aerially joyous, “are too small to make speeches about; but in memory of several secrets we have between us, I hope you will sometimes wear them.”

He then looked full at Maria, but she responded not even to that electric force that is itself the touch of light—her eyes still downcast, her lips unmoved. He turned to me, and softly, seriously, yet half surprised as it were, shook his head; placing in her hand the first of the unknown caskets he had brought, and the other in my own. She took it without looking up, or even murmuring her thanks; still immediately as he returned to the table, I forced it from her, feeling it might and ought to occasion a revulsion of sensation, however slight.

It succeeded so far as that she gazed, still bending downwards, upon what I held in my own hand now and exhibited to her. It was a full-blown rose of beaten silver, white as snow, without a leaf but exquisitely set upon a silver stem, and having upon one of its broad petals a large dew-drop of the living diamond.

I opened my own strange treasure then, having resigned to her her own : this was a breastpin of purest gold, with the head—a great violet cut from a single amethyst—as perfectly executed as hers. I thrust it into my pocket, for I could not at that instant even rejoice in its possession. And now soon, very soon, the flower-lighted space was cleared ; and we, the chosen few, alone remained.

My heart felt as if it could only break, so violent was the pulse that shook it. I knew that I must make an effort transcending all, or I should lose my power to handle the bow ; and at least I achieved composure of behaviour. Anastase, I can remember, came to me : he touched my hand, and as if he longed with all loosened passion for something like sympathy, looked into my very eyes.

I could scarcely endure that gaze—it was inquisitive to scrutiny, yet dim with unutterable forecast.

The flowers in the Concert Hall were already withering, when after a short separation for refreshment, we returned there and were shut in safely by the closed doors from the distant festal throng.

It was a strange sight—those deserted seats in front, where now none rested saving only the Chevalier, who after hovering amidst the orchestra until all the ranks were filled, had descended as was arranged into the void space, that he might be prepared to criticise the performance. He did not seem much in the mood for criticism—his countenance was lightening with excitement—his eyes burned like stars brought near; that hectic fire, that tremulous blaze, were both for her.

As he retreated, and folding his slender arms, and raising his glorious head, still stood—Maria entered with Anastase. Florimond led her forwards in her white dress as he had promised himself to lead her captive on the day of her espousals: neither hurried nor abashed she came,

in her virgin calm—her virgin paleness. But as they stood for one moment at the foot of the orchestra, he paused, arrested her, his hand was raised; and in a moment with a smile whose tenderness for that moment triumphed, he had placed the silver rose in her dark hair, where it glistened in angelic symbol to the recognition of every one present. She did not smile in return, nor raise her eyes, but mounted instantly, and stood amidst us.

I had no idea until indeed she stood there, a girl amidst us—until she appeared in that light of which she herself was light—how very small she was, how slightly framed; every motion was articulated by the fragility of her form as she stirred so calmly, silently. The bright afternoon from many windows poured upon the polish of her forehead so arched, so eminent, but alas! upon the langours also that had woven their awful mists around her eyes. Her softly curling lips spoke nothing now but the language of sleep in infancy, so gently parted, but not as in inspiration. As she raised that arm so calmly, and the first movement came upon me,

I could not yet regard her, nor until a rest occurred. Then I saw her the same again, except that her eyes were filled with tears, and over all her face that there was a shadow playing as from some sweeping solemn wing, like the imagery of summer leaves that trembles upon a moonlit grass.

Only once I heard that music, but I do not remember it, nor can call upon myself to describe it. I only know that while in the full thrilling tide of that first movement I was not aware of playing, or how I played, though very conscious of the weight upon my heart and upon every instrument. Even Anastase, next whom I stood, was not himself in playing. I cannot tell whether the conductress were herself unsteady, but she unnerved us all, or something too near unnerved us—we were noiselessly preparing for that which was at hand.

At the close of the movement a rushing cadence of ultimate rapidity broke from the stringed force, but the wind flowed in upon the final chords; they waned, they expanded, and, at the simultaneous pause, she also paused. Then strangely,

suddenly, her arm fell powerless—her paleness quickened to crimson—her brow grew warm with a bursting, blood-red blush—she sank to the floor upon her side, silently as in the south wind a leaf just flutters and is at rest; nor was there a sound through the stricken orchestra as Florimond raised her, and carried her from us in his arms.

None moved beside, except the Chevalier, who, with a gaze that was as of one suddenly blinded, followed Anastase instantaneously. We remained as we stood, in a suspense that I for one could never have broken. Poor Florimond's violin lay shattered upon the floor, the strings shivered, and yet shuddering; the rose lay also low: none gathered either up—none stirred—nor any brought us word. I believe I should never have moved again if Dele-mann in his living kindness had not sped from us at last.

He, too, was long away—long, long to return; nor did he, in returning, re-enter the orchestra. He beckoned to me from the screen of the ante-chamber. I met him amidst the glorious garlands, but I made way to him I know not how. That room

was deserted also, and all who had been there had gone. Whither? oh! where might they now remain? Franz whispered to me, and of his few sad words—half hope, half fear, all anguish—I cannot repeat the echo. But it is sufficient for all to remind myself how soon the hope had faded, after few, not many days; how the fear passed with it, but not alone. Yet, whatever passed, whatever faded, left us Love for ever—Love with its dear regrets, its infinite expectations!

PART III.

The Crown of Martyrdom.

CHARLES AUCHESTER.

CHAPTER I.

TWELVE years of after-life cannot but weigh lighter in the balance of recollection than half that number in very early youth. I think this now, pondering upon the threshold of middle age with an enthusiasm fixed and deepened by every change; but I did not think so the day to which I shall defer my particular remembrances—the day I had left Germany for ever—except in dreams. There were other things I might have left behind, that now I carried with me to my home; things themselves all dreams, yet containing in their reminiscences the symbols of my every reality. Eter-

nity alone could contain the substance of those shadows—that shore we deem itself a shadow, alone contains the resolution into glory of all our longings, into peace of all our pain.

Such feelings, engendered by loneliness, took me by the very hand and led me forwards that dreary December evening when I landed in England last, having obtained all that was absolutely necessary to be made my own abroad.

I have not tormented my reader or two with the most insignificant mention of myself between this evening and a time some years before; it would have been impracticable, or, if practicable, impertinent, as I lived those after-years entirely within and to myself. The sudden desertion which had stricken Cecilia of her hero lord, and that suspension of his presence which ensued, had no more power upon me than to call out what was indeed demanded of me under such circumstances—all the persistency of my nature. And if even there had been a complete and actual surrender of all her privileges by professors and pupils, I should have been the last to be found there; and I think that

I should have played to the very empty halls until Ruin hungered for them, and we had fallen together. As it happened, however, my solitude was more actual than any I could have provided for myself; my spirit retreated, and to music alone remained either master or slave.

The very representative of music was no longer such to me; for when we came together after that fatal Midsummer no sign was left of Anastase—"a new king had arisen in Egypt, who knew not Joseph." To him I ought, perhaps, to confess that I owed a good deal, but I cannot believe it; I am fain to think I should have done as well alone; but there was that in the association and habitude of the place, that in the knowledge of being still under the superintendence, however formal and abstracted, of its head, that I could not and would not have flung up the chances of its academical career.

It was, however, no effort to disengage myself from the spot, for any notion of the presence of him I best loved was, alas! now, and had been long, entirely dissociated from it. Not one smile

from those fair lips, not one ray from those awful eyes, had sunned the countenances of the ever-studious throng. A monastery could not have been more secluded from the incarnate presence of the Deity than were we in that quiet institution from its distant director.

Let it not be imagined, at the same time, that we could have existed in ignorance of that influence which was streaming—an “eastern star”—through the country that contained him as a light of life; which, in the few fleeting years of my boyhood, had garnered such lustrous immortality for one scarcely past his own first youth. But, in leaving Germany, I was leaving neither the name nor the fame of Seraphael, except to meet them again, where they were dearer yet and brighter than in their cradle-land.

None could estimate — and, young as I yet was, I well knew it—the proportion of the renown his early works had gained in this strange country. The noblest attribute of Race—the irresistible conception of the power of Race—had scarcely then

received a remote encouragement, though physiologists abounded ; but, like our artists, they lacked an ideal ; or, like our politicians, " a man."

Still, whether people knew it or not, they insensibly worshipped the perfect beauty whose development was itself Music, and whose organization matchless and sublimated was but the purest type of that human nature on which the Divine One placed his signet, and which he instituted by sharing, the nearest to his own. Those who did know it denied it in the face of their rational conviction, because it was so hard to allow that to be a special privilege in which they can bear no earthly part. For all the races of the earth cannot tread down one step of that Race, nor diminish in each millennium its spiritual approximation to an everlasting endurance. Or perhaps, to do them justice, the very conviction was as dark to them as that of death, which all must hold, and so few care to remind themselves of. At all events, it was yet a whisper ; and a whisper not so universally wafted as whispers in general are ; that Seraphael was of unpervverted Hebrew ancestry, both recog-

nisant of the fact, and auspicious in its entertainment.

Many things affected me as changes when I landed at London Bridge, for I had not been at home for three whole years ; and was not prepared to meet such changes, though aware of many in myself.

I cannot allude to any now, except the railway, which was the first I had seen, and whose line to our very town, almost to our very house, had been not six months completed. I shall never forget the effect, nor has it ever left me when I travel ; I cannot find it monotonous, nor anything but marvel. It was certainly evening when I entered the stupendous terminus, and nothing could have so adapted itself to the architecture as the black-grey gloom, lamp-strung, streaming with gas-jets.

Such gloom breathed deadly cold, presaging the white storm or the icing wind, and it was the long drear line itself that drew my spirit forth, as itself lonely to bask in loneliness—such weird, wild insecurity seemed hovering

upon the darkened distance—such a dream of hopeless achievement seemed the space to be overpassed that awful evening. As I walked along the carriage-line I felt this, although the engine-fire glowed furiously, and it spit out sparks in bravery; but the murmur of exhaustless power prevented my feeling in full force what that power must really be.

It was not until we rolled away, and left the lamps in their ruddy sea behind us—had lost ourselves far out in the dark country; had begun to rush into the very arms of night—that I could even bear to remember how little people had told me of what steam-travelling by land would prove in my experience. It seemed to me as if I, too, ought to have changed, and to carry wings; the spirit pined for an enfranchisement of its own as peculiar, and recalled all painfully that its pinings were in vain.

A thousand chapters have been expended upon the delights of return to home, and a thousand more will probably insure for themselves laudable publicity. I should be an all-ungrateful wretch if

I refused my single Ave at that olden shrine. I cannot quite forget, either, that none of my wildest recollections outdazzled its near brightness as I approached; the poetic isolation of my late life, precious as it was in itself, and inseparable from my choicest appreciation, seeming but to enhance the genial sweetness of the reality in my reception.

Long before I arrived in that familiar parlour, a presence awaited me which had ever appeared to stand between my actual and my ideal world—it was that of my brother and earliest friend, dear Lenhart Davy, who had walked out into the winter night expressly and entirely to meet me; and who was so completely unaged, unchanged, and unalloyed, that I could but wonder at the freshness of the life within him, until I remembered the fountains where it fed. He was as bright, as earnest, as in the days of my infant faith; but there was little to be said until we arrived at home.

Cold as was the season, and peculiarly susceptible as our family has ever been to cold, the street-door positively stood ajar! and hiding

behind it was Margareth, oblivious of rheumatism and frost, to receive her nursling. When she had pronounced upon my growth her enchanted eulogy, that I was taller than ever and more like myself, I was dragged into the parlour by Davy, and found them all; the bloom of the firelight restoring their faces exactly as I had left them. My mother, as I told her, looked younger than myself, which might easily be the case as I believe I was born grown up; and Clo was very handsome in her fashion, wearing the old pictorial raiment. My sister Lydia had lately received preferment, and introduced me on the instant to her prospects, a gentlemanly individual upon the sofa who had not even concluded his college career, but was in full tilt for high mathematical honours at that which I have heard called Oxford's rival, but upon whose merits as a residence and Academe celestial I am not competent to sit in judgment.

These worthies dismissed, I was at liberty to spend myself upon the most precious of the party. They were Millicent and her baby, which last I had never seen; a lady of eighteen months, kept thus

late out of her cradle that she, too, might greet her uncle. She was a delicious child—I have never found her equal—and had that indescribable rarity of appearance which belongs, or we imagine it to belong, to an only one. Carlotta—so they had christened her after unworthy me—was already calling upon my name, to the solemn ecstasy of Davy and his wife's less sustained gratification.

I have never really seen such a sight as that sister and brother of mine, with that only child of theirs. When we drew to the table, gloriously spread for supper, and my mother in one of her old-fashioned agonies implored for Carlotta to be taken upstairs; Davy, perfectly heedless, brought her along with him to his chair, placed on his knee and fed her, fostered her till she fell asleep and tumbled against his shoulder, when he opened his coat-breast for her and just let her sleep on. Calling no attention to her beauties in so many words, certainly; but paying very little attention to anything else; and at last, when we all retired, carrying her away with him up-stairs, where I

heard him walking up and down his room, with a hushing footstep, long after I had entered mine.

It was not until the next morning that I was made fully aware of Davy's position. After breakfast, as soon as the sun was high enough to prepare the frosty atmosphere for the reception of the baby, I returned with Millicent and himself to their own home. I had been witness to certain improvements in that little droll house, but a great deal more had been done since my last visit.

For example, there was a room down-stairs, built out, for the books, which had accumulated too many; and over this room had Davy designed a very sweet greenhouse, to be approached from the parlour itself. The same order overlaid everything; the same perfume of cleanliness permeated every corner; and it was just as well this was the case, so jammed and choked up with all sorts of treasures and curiosities were the little landing-place, the tiny drawing-room, the very bed-room and *a half*, as Davy called my own little closet with the little carven bed's-head. Everywhere his

shadow, gliding and smiling silently, though at the proper time she had plenty to say too, came Millicent after him ; nor was the baby ever far behind ; for at the utmost distance might be glimpsed a nest of basket-work, lined with blush colour, placed on a chair or two among the geraniums and myrtles, and in that basket the baby lay ; while her mamma, who only kept one servant, made various useful and ornamental progresses through the house.

While Davy was at home, however, Carlotta was never out of his arms, or, at least, off his lap ; she had learned to lie quite quietly across his knees while he wrote or read, making no more disturbance than a dove would have done. I believe he was half jealous because, when I took her, she did not cry ; but began to put her fingers into my eyes and to carry my own fingers to her mouth. This morning we had her between us when we began to talk, and it was with his eyes upon her that Davy first said—

“ Well, Charles, you have told me nothing of

your plans yet; I suppose they are hardly formed."

"Oh yes, quite formed,—at least as formed as they can be without your sanction. You know what you wrote to me about—your last letter?"

"You received that extemporaneous extravaganza then, Charles? which I afterwards desired I had burned."

"I take that as especially unkind on your part, as I could not but enter with the most eager interest into every line."

"Not unkind, though I own it was a little cowardly. I felt rather awed in submitting my ideas to you when you were at the very midst of music in its most perfect exposition."

"Oh! I did not quite discover that, Lenhart. There are imperfections everywhere, and will be, in such a mixed multitude as of those who press into the service of what is altogether perfect."

"The old story, Charlie."

"Rather the new one. I find it every day placed before me in a stronger light; but it has not long held, even with me. How very little we

can do, even at the utmost, and how very hard we must labour even to do that little !”

“ I am thankful to hear you say so, Charles, coming fresh from the severities of study ; but we are some few of us in the same mind.”

“ Then let us hold together,—and this brings me to my purpose. I am not going to settle in London, Lenhart ; that is a mistake of yours. I will never leave you while I can be of any use.”

“ Leave me, Charlie ? Ah ! would that I could cherish the possibility of your remaining here ! But, with your power and your promise of success, who would not blame those who should prevent your appearance in London ?”

“ I will never make my appearance anywhere, my dearest brother, at least, not as you intend. I could have no objection to play anywhere if I were wanted, and if any one cared to hear me ; but I will never give up the actual hold I have on this place. As much may be done here as anywhere else, and more, I am certain, than in London. There is more room here ; less strain and stress,—and, once more, I will not leave you.”

“ But how, my Charlie, in what sense ? ”

“ I will work along with you and for you while I work for myself. I am young, very young, and, I dare say, very presumptuous in believing myself equal to the task ; but I should wish, besides being resident professor, to devote myself especially to the organization of that band of which you wrote, and which, in your letter, you gave me to understand it is your desire to amalgamate with your class. You do not see, Lenhart, that, young as I am, nothing could give me a position like this, and that, if I fail, I can but return to a less ambitious course.”

“ There is no course, Charles, that I do not consider you equal to ; but I cannot reconcile it with my conscience to bind you to a service so signal for my own sake ; it is a mere sketch of a Spanish castle I had reared in an idle hour.”

“ We will raise a sure fame on solid foundations, Lenhart, and I do not care about fame for its own sake. After all, you cannot, with your musical eclecticism, prefer me to become mixed up in the horrible struggle for precedence which, in London,

degrades the very nature of art and renders its pursuit a misnomer."

"You have not given up one of your old prejudices, Charles."

"No, Davy. I feel we can do more acting together than either separately, for the cause we love best and desire to serve. You know me well, and that, whatever I have learned in my life abroad, no taste is so dear to me as yours—no judgment I should follow to the death so gladly. Besides, all the rest, which is made up of a good deal more than one can say, I could never consent, as an instrumentalist, and as holding that instrument to be part of myself, to infect my style with whims and fashions which alone would render it generally acceptable. I *must* reserve what I musically believe as my musical expression, and nothing can satisfy me in that respect but the development of the orchestra."

"Poor orchestra! it is a very germ, a winter-seed at present, my ever-sanguine Charlie."

"I am not sanguine; on the contrary, I am disposed to suspect treachery everywhere, even in

myself, and certainly in you, if you would have me go to London, take fashionable lodgings, and starve myself on popular precedents, among which that most magnificent one of lionizing musical professors. No, I could not bear that, and no one would care a whit for my playing as I *feel*. I should be starved out-and-out. If you can initiate me a little yourself into your proceedings, I think I shall be able to persuade you that I ought to be only where my impulse directs me to remain."

Davy at this juncture deprived me of the baby, who had been munching my finger all the time we talked, and when he had placed her in her nest,—a portent of vast significance,—he enlightened me indeed to the full; and we informed Millicent when she came up stairs, for nothing could be done without asking her accord. It was greatly to my satisfaction that she entirely agreed with me, and a great relief to Davy, who, in the plenitude of his delicate pride, could hardly bear the thought of suggesting anything to anybody, lest his suggestion should unsteady any fixed idea of their own. Millicent cordially asserted that she felt there was a more interesting sphere about

them than she could imagine to exist anywhere else ; and perhaps she was right, for no one could sufficiently laud the extirpation of ancient prejudices by Davy's firm voice and ardent heart. I could not possibly calculate at that moment the force and extent of his singular efforts, and their still more unwonted effects in so short a time made manifest. I heard of these from Millicent, who could talk of nothing else, to me at least ; after Davy, ever anxious, had left us for his morning's lessons which occupied him in private, though not much more than formerly, as his peculiar attention and nearly his whole time were devoted more determinately than ever to the instruction and elevation of the vocal institution he had organized.

"No one can tell, Charles," said Millicent, among other things, "how heroically and patiently he has worked, rejecting all but the barest remuneration, to bring all forwards as he has succeeded in doing, and has nobly done. You will say so when you hear,—and you must hear to-morrow evening."

"I shall indeed feel strange, Millicent," I re-

plied, "to sit at his feet once more, and to feel again all that went through me in the days when I learned of him alone. But I am very curious about another friend of mine. I suppose you can tell me just as well as he."

"About Miss Benette, Charles?"

"Yes, and also little Laura."

"I know nothing; we know nothing of her or what she has been doing,—but you must have heard of Clara?"

"Not a word. I have been very quiet, I assure you."

"So much the better for you, Charles. But she has not lost your good opinion?"

"She would have that wherever she went."

"I believe it. My husband has, of course, never lost sight of her; yet it was not until the other day, and quite by accident, that we heard of all she has become. A very old Italian stager, Stelli by name, called on Lenhart the other day at the class, and, after hearing several of the pieces, asked him whether his pupil, Miss Benette, had not belonged to it once on a time. He said yes; and, finding

that the signor was acquainted with her, brought him home to dinner, and we were told a great deal that it is very difficult to tell, even to you, Charles. She must, however, be exactly what you always imagined."

"I should not only imagine, but expect, she would remain unaltered. I do not believe such eyes could change, or the owner of such eyes."

"He says just so: he says that she is an angel; he continued to call her angela, angela, and could call her nothing else."

"Is she singing in Italy just now?"

"It is just that we asked him. You know she went to Italy for study, and no one heard a word about her; she did not omit to write, but never mentioned what she was doing. Only the third year she sent us news of her debut. This was but last May. The news was in a paper,—not in her letter. In her letter she only spoke of ourselves, and sent us a present for baby,—such a piece of work, Charles, as you never saw. I thought she would have quite given up work by that time. The letter was a simple, exquisite expression of regard

for her old Master; and when Lenhart answered it, she wrote again. *This* letter contained the most delicate intimation of her prosperous views. She was entirely engaged at that time, but told us she trusted to come to England an early month next year, for she says she finds, having been to Italy, she loves England best."

"That is rather what I should have expected. She had not an Italian touch about her; she would weary there."

"I should scarcely think so, Charles, for Stelli described her beauty as something rose-like and healthful,—‘fresher than your infant there,’ he said, pointing to baby; and from her style of singing grand and sacred airs, she has been fancifully named and is called everywhere, ‘La Benetta Benedetta.’"

"That strikes home to me very pleasantly, Millicent. She had something blessed and infantine in her every look. I admire that soubriquet, but those usually bestowed by the populace are most unmeaning; her own name, however, suits her best; it is limpid like the light in her eyes. There is no

word so apt as 'clear' for the expression of her soul. And what, Millicent, of her voice and style?"

"Something wonderful, no doubt, Charles, if she obtained an engagement in the midst of such an operative pressure as there was this year. I hope she will do something for England too. We have not so many like her that we can afford to lose her altogether."

"I know of not one, Millicent, and shall, if it be my good fortune to see her, persuade her not to desert us,—but Lenhart will have more chance."

"La Benetta Benedetta!" I could not forget it—it haunted me like the words of some chosen song: I was ever singing it in my mind; it seemed the most fitting, and the only not irreverent homage with which one could have strewed the letters of her name, a most successful hieroglyph. Nor the less was I reminded of her when on the following evening I accompanied my sister, who, for once had allowed Clo to take charge of her baby, to the place now so altered since I left it, where the vocal family united. We entered at the same door—we approached the same room;

but none could again have known it unless, as in my case, he could have pointed out the exact spot on which he had been accustomed to sit. The roof was raised, the rafters were stained that favourite sylvan tint of Davy's—the windows lightly pencilled with it upon their ground-glass arches—the walls painted the softest shade of grey, harmonizing perfectly with the purple-crimson tone of the cloth that covered seats and platform. Alas! as I surveyed that platform, I felt with Davy how much room there was for increased and novel yet necessary organism, in the perfectibility of the system, for on that glowing void outspread, where his slight, dark form, and white face and *glancing* hands alone shone out—I could but dream of beholding the whole array in clustering companionship, of those mystic shapes that suggest to us in their varied yet according forms, the sounds that creep, that wind, that pierce, that electrify, through parchment, or brass, or string.

In a word, they wanted a band very much. It would not have signified whether they had one or not, had the class continued in its primitive posi-

tion, and in which its enemies would have desired it to remain—an unprogressive mediocrity. But as it is the nature of true art to be progressive ever, it is just as ignorant to expect shortcomings of a true artist as it would be vain to look for ideal success amongst the leaders of musical taste, neither endowed with aspiration nor volition. Now, to hear those voices rise, prolong themselves, lean in uncorrupted tone upon the calm motet, or rest in unagitated simplicity over a pause of Ravenscroft's old heavenly verses—made one almost leap to reduce such a host to the service of an appropriate band, and to institute orchestral worship there. I could but remind myself of certain great works, paradises of musical creation from whose rightful interpretation we are debarred, either by the inconsistency with the chosen band of the selected chorus, or by the inequality of the band itself. It struck me that a perfect dream might here be realized in full perfection should my own capabilities at least keep pace with the demand upon them—were I permitted to take my part in Davy's plan as we had treated of it to each other. I told him

as we walked home together a little of my mind ; he was in as bright spirits as at his earliest manhood ; it was a favourable moment, and in the keen December moonlight we made a vow to stand by each other then and ever.

Delightful as was the task, and responsive to my inmost resolutions, the final result I scarcely dared anticipate : it was no more easy at first than to trace the source of such a river as the Nile. Many difficulties darkened the way before me, and my own musical knowledge seemed but as a light flung immediately out of my own soul, making the narrow circle of a radiance for my feet that was unavailable for any others. My position as Davy's brother-in-law gave me a certain hold upon my pupils ; but no one can imagine what suffering they weatlessly imposed upon me. The number I began with, receiving each singly not at my own home but in a hired room, was not more than eight, amateurs and neophytes, either ; the amateurs esteeming themselves no less than amateurs, and something more ; the neophytes chiefly connexions of the choral force, and of an individual stubborn-

ness not altogether to be appreciated at an early period. I could laugh to remember myself those awful mornings when, after a breakfast at home which I could not have touched had it been less delicately prepared, I used to repair to that room of mine and await the advent of those gentlemen, all older than myself except one, and he the most presto in pretensions of the set. The room was at the back and top of a house ; and over the swinging window-blind I could discern a rush now and then of a deep dark smoke ; and a wail, as of a demon sorely tried, would shrill along my nerves as the train dashed by. The trains were my chief support during the predominance of my ordeal, they superinduced a sensation that was neither of music nor of stolidity.

After a month or two, however, dating from the first week of February, when together with the outpeering of the first snowdrop from the frost I assumed my dignities, I discovered that I had gained a certain standing, owing to the fact of my being aware what I was about, and always attending to the matter in hand. Of my

senior pupils, one was immensely conversable, so conversable that, until he had disgorged himself of a certain quantity of chat, it was impossible to induce him to take up his bow ; another, contemplative, so contemplative that I always had to unpack his instrument for him, and to send it after him when he was gone, in a general way ; a third, so deficient in natural musicality that he did not like my playing ! and soon put up for a vacant cboe in the band of the local theatre, and left me in the lurch. But desperately irate with them as I was, and almost disgusted with my petty efforts, I made no show of either to Davy, nor did they affect my intentions, nor stagger my fixed assurance. All my experiences were hoarded and husbanded by me to such purpose on my own account, that I advanced myself in exact proportion to the calm statu quo in which remained at present my orchestral nucleus. My patience was rewarded, however, before I could have dared to hope, by a steady increase of patronage during April and May ; in fact I had so much to do in the eight weeks of those two months that my mother de-

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clared I was working too hard, and projected a trip for me somewhere. Bless her ever benignant heart! she always held that everybody, no matter who, and no matter what they had to do, should recreate during three months out of every twelve! How my family, all celebrated as they were for nerves of salient self-assertion endured my home-necessary practice, I cannot divine; but they one and all made light of it, even declaring they scarcely heard that all-penetrating sound distilled down the staircase and through closed parlour doors. But I was obliged to keep in my own hand most vigorously, and sustained myself by the hope that I should one day lead off my dependants in the region now made sacred by voice and verse alone. It was my habit to give no lessons after dinner, but to pursue my own studies, sadly deficient as I was in too many respects, in the long afternoons of spring, and to walk in the lengthening evenings, more delicious in my remembrance than any of my boyish treasure-times. On class-nights I would walk to Davy's, find him in a paroxysm of anxiety just gone off, leaving Millicent to bemoan his want

of appetite and to devise elegant but inexpensive suppers: I would have one good night game with my soft-lipped niece—watch her mamma unswathe the cambric from her rosy limbs—see the white lids drop their lashes over her blue eyes' sleepfulness—listen to the breath that arose like the pulses of a flower to the air—feel her sweetness make me almost sad, and creep down stairs most noiselessly. Millicent would follow me to fetch her work-basket from the little conservatory—would talk a moment before she returned up stairs to work by the cradle-side—would steal with me to the door, look up to the stars or the moon a moment, and heave a sigh, a sigh as from happiness too large for heart to hold—and I, having picked my path around the narrow gravel, smelling the fresh mould in the darkness; having reached the gate, would just glance round to sign adieu, and not till then would she withdraw into the warm little hall, and close the door. Then, off I was to the class—to see the windows aglow from the street—to hear the choral glory greeting me in sounds like chastened organ-tones—to mount, unquestioned,

into the room, to find the crimson seats all full, the crimson platform bare, save of that quick, dark form and those gleaming hands. I sit down behind, and bask luxuriously in that which to me is precious as the "sunshine to the bee;" or I come down stooping a few steps, and taking the edge of a bench, where genial faces smile for me, I peep over the sheet of the pale mechanic or rejoicing weaver, whose visage is drawn out of its dread fatigue as by a celestial galvanism, and join in the psalm, or mix my spirit in the soaring antiphon. Davy meets me afterwards—we wait until everybody has passed out—we pack away the books—we turn down the gas—or at least a gentleman does, who appears to think it an essential part of music that a supreme bustle should precede and follow its celebrations, and who, locking the door after we attain the street, tenders Davy the key in a perfect agony of courteous patronage, and bows almost unto the earth. I accompany my brother home, and Millicent and he and I sup together, the happiest trio in the town. On other nights I sup at home, and after my walk, as I come in earlier, and

after I have given reports of Millicent, and her spouse, and the baby ; also, whether it has been out this day (my mother having a righteous prejudice against certain winds)—I sometimes play to them such moving melodies as I fancy will touch them, but not too deeply—and indulge in the lighter moods that music does not deny, even to the uninitiated—often trifling with my memory of old times as they begin to seem to me ; and, alas ! have seemed many years already—though I am young, so young that I scarcely know yet how young I am.

CHAPTER II.

I WAS in the most contented frame of mind that can be conceived of until the very May-month of the year I speak of, when my sensations, as usual, began to be peculiar. I don't think anybody can love summer better than I do—can more approvedly languish out by heavy-shaded stream in an atmosphere all roses, the summer noons—can easier spend in *insomnie* the lustrous moony nights.

But May does something to me of which I am not aware during June or July, or at the first delicate spring-time. When the laburnums rain their gold, and the lilacs toss broad-bloomed their grape-like clusters—when the leaves full swelling

are yet all veined with light—I cannot very well work hard, and would rather slave the livelong eleven months beside, to have that month a holiday. So it happened now ; and though I had no absolute right to leave my pupils, and desert the first stones of my musical masonry just laid and smoothed, I was obliged to think that if I were to have a holiday at all, I had better take it then. But I had not decided until I received a double intimation, one from Davy and one from the county newspaper, which last never chronicled events that stirred in London unless they stirred beyond it. My joyous brother brought me the letter, and the paper was upon our table the same morning when I came down to breakfast.

“See here, Charles,” said Clo, who, sitting in her own corner, over her own book, was unwontedly excited, “here is a piece of news for you, and my mother found it first !”

I read, in a castaway paragraph enough, that the Chevalier Seraphael, the pianist and composer, was to pay a visit to England this very summer ;

though to remain in strict seclusion, he would not be inaccessible to professors. He brought with him, I learned, "the fruits of several years' solitary travel, no doubt worthy of his genius and peculiar industry."

Extremely to the purpose were these expressions, for they told me all I wanted to know—that he was alive, must be himself again, and had been writing for those who loved him—for men and angels. Now, for my letter—I had held it without opening it, for I chose to do so when alone, and waited until after breakfast. It was a choice little supplement to that choicest of all invites for my spirit and heart—a note on foreign paper—the graceful, firm character of the writing found no difficulty to stand out clear and black from that milken-water hue and spongy texture. It was from Clara, a simple form that a child might have dictated, yet containing certain business reports for Davy, direct as from one who could master even business.

She was coming definitely to England, not either for any purposes save those all worthy of

herself: she had accepted, after much consideration, a London engagement for the season; and, said she,

“I only have my fears lest I should do less than I ought for what I love best—it is so difficult to do what is right by music in these times when it is fashionable to seem to like it. You will give me a little of your advice, dear Sir, if I need it, as perhaps I may; but I hope not, because I have troubled you too much already. I trust your little daughter is growing like you to please her mother, and like her mother to please you. I shall be delighted to see it when I come to London, if you can allow me to do so.”

The style of this end of a letter both amused and absorbed me: it was Clara's very idiosyncrasy. I could but think, is it possible that she has not altered more than her style of expressing herself has done? I must go and see.

Davy received my ravings with due compassion and more indulgence than I had dared to hope. The suspension of my duties leaving our orchestra in limbo still longer, disconcerted him a little, but

he was the first to say I must surely go to London. The only thing to be discovered was when to go, so as not to frustrate either one of my designs or the other, and I declared he must, to that end, address Clara on the very subject.

He did so, and in a fortnight there came the coolest note to say she would be in London the next day, and that she had heard the great musician would arrive before the end of the month. I inly marvelled whether, in all the course of his wanderings, Clara and the Chevalier had met ; but still I thought and prophesied not. I was really reluctant to leave Davy with his hands and head full, that I might saunter with my own in kid gloves and swarming with May fancies ; but for once my selfishness—or something higher whose mortal frame is selfishness—impelled me. I found myself in the train at the end of the next week, carrying Clara's address in my memorandum-book, and my violin-case in the carriage along with me.

It was early afternoon, and exquisitely splendid weather when I arrived in London. In London,

however, I had little to do just then, as the address of the house to which I was bound was rather out of London—above the smoke—beyond the stir—at the very first plunge into the surrounding country that lingers yet as a dream upon her day-reality, with which dreams suit not ill, and from which they seldom part. I love the heart of London, in whose awful deeps reflect the mysteries unfathomable of every secret, and where the homeless are best at home—where the homebred fear not to wander, assured of sweet return; but I do not love its immediate precincts, the rude waking stage between that profound and the conserved untainted sylvan vision, that, once overpast it, dawns upon us.

Dashing as abruptly as possible, and by the nearest way through all the brick wilderness outward, I reached in no long weary time, and by no long weary journey though on foot, a quiet road, which by a continuous but gentle rise carried me to the clustered houses neither quite hamlet nor altogether village, where Miss Benette had hidden her heart among the leaves.

Cool and shady was the side I took, though the sunshine whitened the highway, and every summer promise beamed from the soft sky's azure, the green earth's bloom. The painted gates I met at intervals, or the iron-wreathed portals, guarded dim walks through whose perspective villas glistened—all beautiful as they were discerned afar in their frames of tossing creepers, with gay verandahs or flashing green-houses. But the wall I followed gave me not a transient glimpse of gardens inwards; so thickly blazed the laburnums and the paler flames of the rich acacia, not to speak of hedges all sweetbriar matted into one embrace with double-blossomed hawthorn. I passed garden after garden and gate after gate, seeing no one; for the great charm of those regions consists in the extreme privacy of every habitation—privacy which the most exclusive nobleman might envy, and never excel in his wilderness parks or shrubberies—and when at length I attained the summit of the elevation where two roads met and shut in a sweep of actual country, and I came to the

end of the houses, I began to look about for some one to direct me; then, turning the corner, I came in turning upon what I had been seeking, without having really sought it by any effort.

The turn in the road I speak of went tapering off between hedgerows; and meadow-lands as yet unencroached upon swept within them as far as I could see. But just where I stood, a cottage, older than any of the villas and framed in shade more ancient than the light groves I left behind me, peeped from the golden and purple May-trees across a moss-green lawn—a perfect picture in its silence, and a very paradise of fragrance. It was built of wood, and had its roof-hung windows and drooping eaves protected by a spreading chestnut-tree, whose great green fans beat coolness against every lattice, and whose blossoms had kindled their rose-white tapers at the sun. The garden was so full of flowers that one could scarcely bear the sweetness, except that the cool chestnut shadow dashed the breeze with freshness as it swept the heavy foliage, and sank upon the chequered grass

to a swoon. I was not long lost in contemplating the niche my saint had chosen, for I could have expected nothing fitter, but I was at some loss to enter, for the reminiscences of my childhood burdened me, and I dreaded lest I should be deprived of anything I now held stored within me, by a novel shock of being. I need not have feared.

After waiting till I was ashamed, I opened the tiny gate and walked across the grass, still soft with the mowing of the morning, to the front door where I pulled a little bell-handle half smothered in the wreaths of monthly roses that were quivering and fluttering like pink doves about the door and lower windows. This was as it should be, the very door-bell dressed with flowers; but more as it should be it was, that Thoné opened the door. I was almost ready to disappear again, but that her manner was the most reassuring to troublesome nerves. She did not appear to have any idea who I was, nor did she even stare when I presented my card, but like some strange bronze escaped from its pedestal

and attired in muslin, she conducted me onwards down a little low hall half filled with the brightest plants, into a double parlour whose folding-doors were closed, and whose diamond-paned back-window looked out far and very far into the country.

Hearing not a voice in the next room, nor any rustle, nor even a soft foot hastily cross the beamed ceiling overhead, I dared look about me for a moment—hid my hat in confusion under a chair—saw that the round table had a bowl of flowers in its centre—caught sight of my face in the intensely polished glass-door of a small closed book-case—and, as if detected in some act, walked away to the window.

I could not have done a better thing to prepare myself for any fresh excitement ; I was ready in an instant to weep with joy at the beauty that flooded my spirit. Over and beyond the garden I gazed ; it did not detain my eye—I passed its tree-tops, all apple-bloom and lilac, and its sudden bursts of grass where the tree-

tops parted. I looked out to the country, an undulating country, a sea of green flushed here and there with a bloomy level or a breeze upon the crimson clover—odorous bean-fields quivered, and their scent was floating everywhere, it drowned the very garden sweetness, and blended in with waftures of unknown fragrance, all wild essences shed from woodbines, from dog-roses, and the new-cut grass, or plummy meadow-sweet by the waters of rills flowing up into the distance, silver in the sunlight. Soft hills against the heaven swept over visionary valleys—the sunshine lay white and warm upon glistening summer seats and picture cottages—over all spread the purple melting, brooding sky, transparent on every leaf and blossom, shining upon those tender sloping hills with an amethyst haze of light, not shade.

As I stood, the things that seemed had never been, and the things that had been grew dilated, and indefinitely bright—the soft thrall of the suspense that bound me intertwining itself with mine “electric chain,” as that May-dream mixed

itself with all my music, veiling it as moonlight the colours of the flowers, or as music itself veils passion.

I waited quite half an hour and had lost myself completely, feeling as if no change could come, when, without a sound, some one entered behind me. I knew it by the light that burst through the folding-door, which had however again closed when I turned—for the tread was so silent I might otherwise have gone dreaming on. Clara stood before me—so little altered, that I could have imagined she had been put away in a trance when I left her last, and but this instant was restored to me.

She was not more womanly, nor less child-like ; and for her being an actress, it seemed a thing impossible. I could but stand and gaze ; nor did she seem surprised, nor did her eyes droop, nor her fair cheek mantle—through the untrembling lashes I caught the crystal light as she opposed me, still waiting for me to speak.

I was heartily ashamed at last, and resolved to make her welcome as she maintained that

strange regard. I put out my hand, and in an instant she greeted me—the infantine smile shone suddenly, that had soothed me so long ago.

“I am very glad to see you, Miss Benette. It was very kind of you to let me come.”

“By no means,” she replied, with the slightest possible Italian softening of her accent. “I am very much obliged to you, and I am very pleased also. Please sit down, Sir, for you have been standing, I am afraid, a long time. I was out at first, and since I returned I made haste, but still I fear I have kept you waiting.”

“I could have waited all day, Miss Benette, to see such a window as this! How did you manage to put your foot into such a nest?”

“It is a very sweet little place, and the country is most beautiful. I don’t know what they mean by its being too near London. I must be near London, and yet I could not exactly live in it, for it makes me idle.”

“How very strange, it has the same effect upon me—that is to say, I always dream in those streets

and lose half my purpose. Still it must be almost a temptation to indulge a certain kind of idleness here ; in such a garden as that, for example, one could pass all one's time."

" I do pass half my time in the garden, and yet I do not think it is too much, for it makes me well, and I cannot work when I am not well, I was always unfortunate in that respect."

" How do you think I look, by the by, Miss Benette ? Am I very much changed ? It is perhaps however, not a safe question."

" Quite safe, Sir. You have grown more and more like your inseparable companion—you always had a look of it, and now it takes the place of all other expression."

" I don't know whether that is complimentary or not, you see, for I never heard your opinion in old times. I was a very little silly boy then, and not quite so well aware of what I owed to you as I may be now."

" I do not feel that you owe anything to anybody, Mr. Auchester ; for you would have gone to your own desires as resolutely through peril

as through pleasure; at all events, if you are still as modest as you were, it is a great blessing now you have become a soul which bears so great a part. If I must speak truth, however, about your looks, you seem as delicate as you used to be, and I do not suppose you could be anything else. You have not altered except to have grown up."

"And you, if I may say so, have not altered in growing up."

Nor had she. She had not gained an inch in height: she could never have worn that black silk frock those years; yet the folds so grave and costly still shielded her gentle breast to meet the snow-soft ruffle that fringed her throat; nor had she ornament upon her—neither bracelet nor ring upon the dimpled hands, the delicate wrists. Though her silken hair had lengthened into wreaths upon wreaths behind, she still preserved those baby-curls upon her temples, nor had a shade more majesty gathered to her brow; the regal innocence was throned there, and looked forth from her eyes as from a shrine, but it was evident that

there was nothing about her from head to foot on which she piqued herself—a rare shortcoming of feminine maturity. The only perceptible difference in the face was when she spoke or smiled, and then the change, the deepened sweetness, can be no more given to description than the notion of music to the destitute ear. It was something of a reserve too inward to be approached, and too subtle to subdue its own influence; like perfume from unseen flowers, diffusing itself when the wind awakens, while we know neither whence the windy fragrance comes nor whither it flows.

“Is it possible, Miss Benette,” I continued—for I forced myself absolutely to speak, I should so infinitely have preferred to watch her silently—“that you can have passed through so much since I saw you?”

“No, I have lived a very quiet life; it is you who have lived in all the stir until you fancy there is not any calm at all.”

“I should have certainly found calm here. But you, I thought, and indeed I know, have had

every kind of excitement ready made to your hand, and only waiting for you to touch the springs."

"I have had no excitement till I came here."

"None? Why who could have had more and who could have borne the same so bravely? We have heard of you here, and it must have been a transcending tempest for the shock to echo so far."

"I do not call singing in theatres, and acting, excitement. I always felt cool and collected in them; for I knew they were not real, and that I should get through them soon, and very glad should I be; so I was patient and did my best. You look at me shocked: I knew I should shock you after all our talk."

"Oh, fie! Miss Benette, to talk so, then, and to shock yourself as you must, if you are faithless."

"Poor I, faithless! well, I am not important enough for it to signify. And yet I should like to tell you what I mean, because you were always kind to me, and I should not wish you to despise

me now. No, Mr. Auchester, I am not faithless ; I love music more and more ; it is the form of my religion—I dare to call it altogether holy ; I am sure indeed, it must be so, or it would have been trodden long ago into nothing with the evil they have heaped over it to hide it, and the mistakes they have made about it. I act and I sing because that is what I can do best, but my idea of music goes with yours, and therefore I am not excited as I should be if I were filling up a place such as that which you fill ; though I would not leave my own for any consideration, and hope to continue in it. My excitement since I came here, where most ladies would be dull or sick, has arisen from the feeling that I am brought into contact with what is most like music as I always find solitude, and also because since I came I have been raised higher by several spirits which are lofty in their desires, instead of being dragged through a mass of all opinions as I was abroad. My pleasures here are so great that I feel my soul to be quite young again, and to grow younger ; and you cannot fancy what it is to return here after being in

London, because you do not go to London, and if you did go to London, you would not do as I do."

She turned to me here, and told me it was her dinner-hour, asking me to remain and dine with her. It was about two o'clock, and I hesitated not to stay; indeed I know not that I could have gone.

We arose together, and I led her forwards: we crossed the hall to a door beyond us; when, removing her little hand from my arm, and laying it on the lock, she looked into my face and smiled.

"You remembered me so well that I hope you will remember an old friend of mine who is staying here with me."

Before I could reply, or even marvel, she opened the door, and we entered. The little dining-room was lined with warmer hues than the airy drawing-room, but white muslin curtains made sails within the crimson ones, and some person stood within these, lightly screened, and looking out over the blind.

"Laura," said Miss Benette—and she turned with exquisite elegance—had it not been for her name which touched my memory, I could not have remembered her—certainly, at least, not then.

Perhaps when we were seated opposite at table, with nothing between us but a vase of garden-flowers, I might have made out her lineaments, but I was called upon by my reminding chivalry to assist the hostess in the dissection of spring chickens and roasted lamb, and there was something besides about that very Laura I did not like to face until she should at least speak and reveal herself, as by the voice one cannot fail to do.

However, she spoke not, nor did Clara speak to her, though we two talked a good deal, that is to say, *I* talked, as so it behoved me to behave, and as I wished to see Miss Benette eat. When, at last all traces of the snowy damask were swept out by a pair of careful hands, and we were left alone with the cut decanters, the early strawberries and sweet summer-oranges, I did determine to

look, for fear Miss Lemark should think I did not dare to do so. I was not mistaken, as it happened, in believing her to be quite capable of this construction as I discovered on regarding her immediately.

Her childish nonchalance had ripened into a hauteur quite alarming, for though she was scarcely my own age, she might have been ten years older. Not that her form was not lithe—lithe as it could be to be endowed with the proper complement of muscles—but for a certain sharpness of outline her countenance would have been languid in repose: her brow retained its singular breadth, but had not gained in elevation; her eyes were large and lambent, fringed with lashes that swept her cheek, though not darker than her hair, which waved as the willow in slightly-turned tresses to her waist. That waist was so extremely slight that it scarcely looked natural, and yet was entirely so as was evident from the way she moved in her clothes.

She afforded a curious contrast to Clara in her black silk robe, for she was dressed in muslin of

the deepest rose-colour, with an immense skirt, its trimmings lace entirely, the sleeves drooped upon her arms which were loaded with bracelets of all kinds, while she wore a splendid chain upon her neck. She bore this over effect very well, and would not have become any other it appeared to me, though there was something faded in her appearance even then—a want of colour in her aspect that demanded of costume the intensest contrasts.

“You have very much grown, Miss Lemark,” I ventured to say, after I had contemplated her to my satisfaction. She had indeed grown; she was taller than I.

“So have you, Mr. Auchester.”

“She has grown in many respects, Mr. Auchester, which you cannot imagine,” said Clara, with a winning mischief in her glance.

“I should imagine anything you pleased I am afraid Miss Benette, if you inspired me. But I have been thinking it is a very curious thing that we should meet in this way, we three

alone, after meeting as we did the first time in our lives."

"It was rather different then," exclaimed Laura, all abruptly, "and the difference is, not that we are grown up, but that when met on the first occasion we told each other our minds, and now we don't dare."

"I am sure I dare," I retorted.

"No, you would not, no more would Clara; perhaps I might, but it would be of no use."

"What did I say then that I dare not say now? I am sure I don't remember."

"You may remember," said Clara, smilingly; "I think it is hardly fair to make *her* remind you."

"It is my desert, if I remembered it first. You thought me very vulgar, and you told me as much, though in more polite language."

"If I thought so then, I may be allowed to have forgotten it now, Miss Lemark, as I think your friend will grant, when I look at you."

"You do not admire my style, Mr. Auchester;

I know you ; it is precisely against your taste. Even Clara does not approve it, and you have not half her forbearance, if, indeed, you have any."

"Nobody, Laura dear, would dispute that you can bear more dressing than I can ; it does not suit me to wear colours, and you look like a flower in them. Does not that colour suit her well, Mr. Auchester?"

"Indeed I think so, and especially this glorious weather, when the most vivid hues are starting out of every old stone. But Miss Lemark could afford to wear green, a very unusual suitability ; it is the hue of her eyes, I think."

Laura had looked down, with that hauteur more fixed than ever now the light of her eyes was lost ; she drew in the corners of her mouth, and turned a shade colder, if not paler, in complexion. I could not imagine what she was thinking, till she said, without raising her eyes,

"You know, Clara, that is not the reason you wear black and I do not. You know that you look

well in anything, because nobody looks at anything you happen to wear; besides, there is a reason I could give if I chose."

"There is no other reason that you know of, Laura," she answered, and then she asked me a question on quite another subject.

I was rather anxious to discover whether Laura had fulfilled her destiny as far as we had compassed ours; but I did not find it easy, for she scarcely spoke, and had not lost a certain abstraction in her air that alienated the observer insensibly from her. After dinner Clara rose, and I made some demonstration of going, which she met so that I could not refuse her invitation to remain, at least an hour or two. We all three retired into the little drawing-room; Miss Benette placed me a chair in the open window which I had admired, and herself sat down opposite, easily as a child, and saying, "I will not be rude to-day, as I used to be, in taking out my work whenever you came."

"It suited you very well, however, and I perceive, by your kind present to my little

niece, that you have not forgotten that delicate art of yours."

"I had laid it aside, except to work for babies, some time, but it was long since I had a baby to work for; and when Mr. Davy sent me word in such joy that his little girl was born, I was so rejoiced to be able to make caps and frocks."

"My sister was very much obliged to you on a former occasion, too, Miss Benette."

"Yes, I suppose she was very much obliged that I did not accept Mr. Davy's hand, or would have been, only she did not know it!"

"I did not mean so. I was remembering whose handiwork graced her on her marriage-day."

"Oh! I forgot the veil. I have made several since that one, but not one like that exactly, because I desired that should be unique. You have not told me, Mr. Auchester, anything about Seraphael and his works."

I was so used to call him and to hear him called, the Chevalier, that at first I started, but was soon in a deep monologue of all that had hap-

pened to me in connexion with him and his music, only suppressing that which I was in the habit of reserving, even in my own mind, from my conscious self. In the midst of my felation, Laura, apparently uninterested, as she had been seated in a chair with a book in her hands, left the room, and we stayed in our talk and looked at each other at the same instant.

"Why do you look so, Mr. Auchester?" said Clara half amused, but with a touch of perturbation, too.

"I was expecting to be asked what I thought of that young lady, and you see I was agreeably disappointed, for you are too well-bred to ask."

"No such thing. I thought you would tell me yourself if you liked, but that you might prefer not to do so, because you are not a person, Sir, to assume critical airs over a person you have only seen a very few hours."

"You do me more than justice, Miss Benette. But though I despair of ever curing myself of the disposition to criticise, I am not inconvertible. I

admire Miss Lemark ; she is improved—she is distinguished ; a little more, and she would be lady-like.”

“I thought lady-like meant less than distinguished. You make it mean more.”

“Perhaps I do mean that Miss Lemark is not exactly like yourself, and that when she has lived with you a little longer, she will be indeed all that she can be made.”

“That would be foolish to say so ; pardon ! for she has lived with me two years now, and has most likely taken as much from me by imitation as she ever will, or by what you perhaps would call sympathy.”

“I find, or should fancy I might find to exist, a great dissymmetry between you.”

“I suppose *dissymmetry* is one of those nice little German words that are used to express what nobody ought to say. I thought you would not go there for nothing. If your dissymmetry means not to agree in sentiment, I do not know that any two bodies could agree quite in feeling, nor would it be so pleasant as to be alone in some moods. I

should be very sorry never to be able to retreat into the cool shade and know that as I troubled nobody, so nobody could get at me, would not you?"

"Oh, I suppose so, in the sense you mean. But how is it I have not heard of this grace, or muse, taking leave to furl her wings at your nest? I should have thought that Davy would have known."

"Should I tell Mr. Davy what I pay to Thoné for keeping my house in order, or whether I went to church on a Sunday? Laura and I always agreed to live together, but we could not accomplish it until lately; I mean, since I was in Italy. We met then as we said we would. I carried her from Paris, where she was alone, with everyone but those who should have befriended her; her father had died, and she was living with Mlle. Margondret; that person I did not like when I was young. If I had known where Laura was, I should have fetched her away before."

I felt for a moment as if I wished that Laura

had never been born, but only for one moment. I then resumed—

“Does she not dance in London? She looks just ready for it.”

“She has accepted no engagement for this season, at present. I cannot tell what she may do, however. Would you like to see my garden, Mr. Auchester?”

“Indeed, I should very particularly like to see it, above all, if you will condescend to accompany me. There is a great deal more that I cannot help wishing for, Miss Benette, but I scarcely like to dream of asking about it to-night.”

“For me to sing? Oh, I will sing for you any time, but I would certainly rather talk to you, at least until the beautiful day begins to go, and it is all bright yet.”

She walked before me without her bonnet down the winding garden-steps; the trellised balustrade was lost in rose-wreaths. We were soon in the rustling air, among the flowers that had not a withered petal, bursting hour by hour.

"It would tease you to carry flowers, Mr. Auchester, or I should be tempted to gather a nosegay for you to take back to London. I cannot leave them alone while they are so fresh, and they quite ask to be gathered. Look at all the buds upon this bush; you could not count them."

"They are Provence roses. What a quantity you have!"

"Thoné chose this cottage for me, because of the number of the flowers. I believe she thinks there is some charm in flowers which will prevent my becoming wicked! If you had been so kind as to bring your violin, I would have filled up the case with roses, and then you would not have had to carry them in your hands."

"But may I not have some, although I did not bring my violin? I never think of anything but violets, though, for strewing that sarcophagus."

"Sarcophagus means tomb, does it not? It is a fine idea of resurrection, when you take out the sleeping music and make it live. I know what

you mean about violets ; their perfume is like the tones of your instrument, and one can separate it from all other scents in the spring, as those tones from all other tones of the orchestra.”

“I have a tender thought for violets, a very sad one, Miss Benette, but still sweet now that what I remember has happened a long while ago.”

“That is the best of sorrow, all passes off with time but that which is not bitter, though we can hardly call it sweet. I am grieved I talked of violets, to touch upon any sorrow you may have had to bear ; still more grieved that you have had a sorrow, for you are very young.”

“I seem to feel, Miss Benette, as if you must know exactly what I have gone through since I saw you, and I am forced to remember it is not the case. I am not sorry you spoke about violets, or rather that I did, because some day I must tell you the whole story of my trouble. I know not why the violet should remind me more than does the beautiful white flower upon that rose-bush over there, for I have in my possession both a

white rose that has lived five summers and an everlasting violet, which will never allow me to forget."

"I know, from your look, that it is about some one dying; but why is that so sad? We must all die, Mr. Auchester, and cannot stay after we have been called."

"It may be so, and must indeed; but it was hard to understand and I cannot now read, why a creature so formed to teach earth all that is most like Heaven should go before any one had dreamed she could possibly be taken; for she had so much to do. You would not wonder at the regret I must ever feel, if you had also known her."

Clara had led me onwards as I spoke, and we stood before that rose-tree; she broke off a fresh rose quietly, and placed it in my hand.

"I am more and more unhappy. It was not because I was not sorry that I said so—pray tell me about her!"

"She was very young, Miss Benette, only sixteen, and more beautiful than any flower in this

garden, or than any star in the sky ; for it was a beauty of spirit, of passion, of awful imagination. She was at school with me, and I was taught by her how slightly I had learned all things ; she had learned too much, and of what men could not teach her. I never saw such a face—but that was nothing. I never heard such a voice—but neither had it any power, compared with her heavenly genius and its sway upon the soul. She had written a symphony ; you know what it is to do that ! She wrote it in three months, and during the slight leisure of a most laborious student life. I was alarmed at her progress, yet there was something about it that made it seem natural. She was ill once, but got over the attack ; and the time came when this strange girl was to stand in the light of an orchestra, and command its interpretation. It was a private performance, but I was among the players. She did not carry it through. In the very midst she fell to the ground, overwhelmed by illness. We thought her dead then, but she lived four days.”

“And died, Sir ? Oh ! she did not die !”

"Yes, Miss Benette, she died ; but no one then could have wished her to live."

"She suffered so?"

"No, she was only too happy. I did not know what joy could rise to, until I beheld her face with the pain all passed, and saw her smile in dying."

"She must have been happy then. Perhaps she had nothing she loved except Jehovah, and no home but Heaven."

"Indeed, she must have been happy, for she left some one behind her who had been to her so dear as to make her promise to become his own."

"I am glad she was so wise then, as to hide from him that she broke her heart to part with him ; for she could not help it : and it was worthy of a young girl who could write a symphony," said Clara, very calmly, but with her eyes closed among the flowers she was holding in her hand. "Sir, what did they do with the symphony ? and, if it is not rude, what did the rose and the violet have to do with this sad tale ?"

“ Oh ! I should have told you first, but I wished to get the worst part over ; I do not generally tell people. It was the day our prizes were distributed she took her death-blow, and I received from the Chevalier Seraphael, who superintended all our affairs and who ordered the rewards, a breast-pin, with a violet in amethyst, in memory of certain words he spoke to me in a rather mystical chat we had held one day, in which he let fall, ‘ the violin is the violet.’ And poor Maria received a silver rose, in memory of St. Cecilia to whom he had once compared her and to whom there was a too true resemblance in her fateful life. The rose was placed in her hair by the person I told you she loved best, just as she was about to stand forth before the orchestra, and when she fainted it fell to my feet. I gathered it up, and have kept it ever since. I do not know whether I had any right to do so, but the only person to whom I could have committed it, it was impossible to insult by reminding of her. In fact, he would not permit it ; he left Cecilia after she was buried, and never returned.”

Clara here raised her eyes, bright and liquid, and yet all-searching—I had not seen them so.

“I feel for him all that my heart can feel. Has he never ceased to suffer? Was she all to him?”

“He will never cease to suffer until he ceases to breathe, and then he will, perhaps, be fit to bear the bliss that was withdrawn from him as too great for any mortal heart; that is his feeling, I believe, for he is still now, and uncomplaining—ever proud, but only proud about his sorrow. Some day you will, I trust, hear him play, and you will agree with me how that grief must have grown into a soul so passionate.”

“You mean, when you say he is proud, he will not be comforted, I suppose? There are persons like that, I know, but I do not understand it.”

“I hope you never will, Miss Benette. You must suffer with your whole nature to refuse comfort.”

“To anyone so suffering I should say, the comfort is that all those who suffer are reserved for joy.”

"Not here, though."

"But it will not be less joy because it is saved for by and by. Now that way of talking makes me angry; I believe there is very little faith."

"Very little, I grant. But poor Florimond Anastase does not fail there."

She stopped beside me as we were pacing the lawn.

"Florimond Anastase! you did not say so? Do you mean the great player? I have heard of that person."

Her face flushed vividly, as rose hues flowing into pearl, her aspect altered, she seemed convicted of some mistaken conclusion; but, recovering herself almost instantly, resumed:—

"Thank you for telling me that story; it will make me better, I hope. I do not deserve to have grown up so well and strong. May I do my duty for it, and, at least, be grateful! You did not say what was done with the symphony?"

"The person I mentioned would not allow it to be retained. And, indeed, what else could be done?"

It was buried in her virgin grave,—a maiden work. She sleeps with her music, and I know not who could have divided them.”

“ You have told me a story that has turned you all over like the feeling before a thunder-storm. I will not hear a word more. You cannot afford to talk of what affects you. Now, let me be very impertinent, and change the key.”

“ By all means ; I have said quite enough, and will thank you.”

“ There is Laura in the harbour, just across the grass, we will go to her if you please, and you shall see her pretty pink frock among the roses, instead of my black gown. On the way I will tell you that there is some one, a lady too, so much interested in you that she was going down to your neighbourhood on purpose to find out about you ; but I prevented her from coming, by saying you would be here, and she answered :—

“ ‘ Tell him, then, to come and call upon me. ’ ”

“ It can only have been one living lady who would have sent that message—Miss Lawrence

Actually I had forgotten all about her, and she returns upon me with a strong sense of my own ingratitude. I will certainly call upon her, and I shall be only too glad to identify my benefactress."

"That you cannot do—she will not allow it; at least to this hour she persists in perfect innocence of the fact."

"That she provided us both with exactly what we wanted at exactly the right time? She chalked out *my* career, at least. I'll make her understand how I feel. Is she not a character?"

"Not more so than yourself, but still one certainly; and a peculiarity of hers is, that generous—too generous almost—as she is, she will not suffer the slightest allusion to her generousities to be made, nor hint to be circulated that she has a heart at all."

Laura was sitting in the arbour, which was now at hand, but not, as Clara prophesied, among the roses in any sense, for the green branches that festooned the lattice were flowerless until the later summer, and her face appeared fading into a mist

of green. The delicate leaves framed her as a picture of melancholy that has attired itself in mirth, which mirth but served to fling out the shadow by contrast, and betray the source. Clara sat on one side, I on the other, and presently we went in to tea. But I did not hear the voice I longed for that evening, nor was the piano opened that I so well remembered standing in its "dark corner."

CHAPTER III.

I DETERMINED not to let a day pass without calling on Miss Lawrence, for I had obtained her address before I left the cottage, and I set forth the following morning. It was in the midst of a desert of west-end houses, none of which have any peculiar characteristic, or suggest any peculiar notion. When I reached the door, I knocked, and it being opened, gave in my card to the footman, who showed me into a dining-room, void of inhabitants, and there left me.

It seemed strange enough to my perception, after I could sit down to breathe, that a lady should live all by herself in such an immense place; but I corrected myself by remembering

she might possibly not live by herself, but have brothers, sisters, nay, any number of relations or dependants. She certainly did not dine in that great room, at that long table polished as a looking-glass, where half a regiment might have messed for change. There were heavy curtains, striped blue and crimson, and a noble sideboard framed in an arch of yellow marble.

The walls were decorated with deep-toned pictures on a ground almost gold colour; and I was fastened upon one I could not mistake as a Murillo, when the footman returned, but only to show me out, for Miss Lawrence was engaged. I was a little crestfallen, not conceitedly so, but simply feeling I had better not have taken her at her word, and retreated in some confusion. Returning very leisurely to my two apartments near the Strand, and stopping very often on the way at music or print-shops, I did not arrive there for at least an hour, and was amazed on my entrance to find a note, directed to myself, lying upon the parlour table-cloth.

I appealed to my landlady from the top of

the kitchen stairs, and she said a man in livery had left it, and was to call for an answer. I read the same on the spot; it had no seal to break, but was twisted backwards and forwards, and had this merit, that it was very difficult to open. It was from Miss Lawrence, without any comment on my call, but requesting my company that very evening to dinner, at the awful hour of seven. Never having dined at seven o'clock in my existence, nor even at six, I was lost in the prospect, and almost desired to decline, but that I had no excuse of any kind on hand; and therefore compelled myself to frame a polite assent, which I despatched, and then sat down to practise.

I made out to myself that she would certainly be alone, as she was the very person to have fashionable habits on her own account; or at least, that she would be surrounded merely by the people belonging to her in her home. But I was still unconfessedly nervous when I drew the door after me and issued into the streets, precisely as the quarter chimes had struck for seven,

and while the streets still streamed with daylight, and all was defined as at noon.

When I entered the square so large and still, with its broad roads and tranquil centre-piece of green, I was appalled to observe a carriage or two, and flattered myself they were at another door; but they had drawn up at the very front, alas! that I had visited in the morning. I was compelled to advance, after having stood aside to permit a lady in purple satin, and two younger ladies in white, to illustrate the doorway in making their procession first. Then I came on, and was rather surprised to find myself so well treated; for a gentleman out of livery, in neater black clothes than a clergyman, deprived me of my hat, and showed me up stairs directly. It struck me very forcibly that it was a very good thing my hair had the habit of staying upon my forehead as it should do, and that I was not anxious to tie my neck-handkerchief over again, as I was to be admitted into the drawing-room in statu quo.

I ascended. It was a well-staircase, whose great height was easy of attainment from the

exceeding lowness of the steps—stone—with a narrow crimson centre strip, soft as thick-piled velvet. On the landing-place was a brilliant globe of humming-birds, interspersed with gem-like spars and many a moss-wreath. The drawing-room door was opened for me before I had done looking ; I walked straight in, and by instinct straight up to the lady of the house, who as instantly met me with a frank familiarity that differs from all other, and supersedes the rarest courtesy.

I had a vague idea that Miss Lawrence must have been married since I saw her, so completely was she mistress of herself, and so easy was her deportment—not to speak of her dress, which was black lace, with a single feather in her hair of the most vivid green ; but unstudied as very few costumes are, even of married women. She was still Miss Lawrence, though, for some one addressed her by name—a broad-featured man behind her—and she turned her head alone, and answered him over her shoulder.

She dismissed him very shortly, or sent him to some one else, for she led me—as a queen might

lead one of her knights, by her finger-tips small as a Spaniard's, upon the tips of my gloves, while she held her own gloves in her other hand—to a gentleman upon the rug, a real gentleman of the old school, to whom she introduced me simply as to her father; and then she brought me back again to a low easy-chair, out of a group of easy-chairs close by the piano, and herself sat down quite near me on the extreme corner of an immense embroidered ottoman.

“You see how it is, my dear Mr. Auchester,” she began in her genial voice, “a dinner, which I should not have dreamed to annoy you with but for one party we expect. You have seen Seraphael, of course, and the little Burney? or perhaps not; they have been in town only two days.”

I was about to express something rather beyond surprise, when a fresh appearance at the door carried her away, and I could only watch the green plume in despair as it waved away from me. To stifle my sensations, I just glanced round the room; it was very large, but so high and so apportioned, that one felt no space to spare.

The draperies, withdrawn for the sunset smile to enter, were of palest sky-colour; the walls of the palest blush; the tables in corners, the chairs in clusters, the cabinets in niches gilt and carven, were of the deepest blue and crimson; upon a carpet of all imaginable hues, like dashed flower petals. Luxurious as was the furniture, in nothing it offended even the calmest taste; and the choicest must have lavished upon it a prodigal leisure.

The pianoforte was a grand one, of dark and lustrous polish; its stools were velvet; a large lamp, unlighted, with gold tracery over its moon-like globe, issued from a branch in the wall immediately over it and harmonised with a circle of those same lamps above the centre ottoman, and with the same upon the mantle-shelf guarding a beautiful French clock, and reflected in a sheet of perfect glass sweeping to the ceiling.

There were about five-and-twenty persons present, who seemed multiplied, by their manner and their dresses, into thrice as many, and who would have presented a formidable aspect

but for the hopes roused within me to a tremendous anticipation. Still I had time, during the hum and peculiar rustle, to scrutinize the faces present: there were none worth carrying away, except that shaded by the emerald plume, and I followed it from chair to chair fondly hoping it would return to mine. It did not; and it was evident we were waiting for some one.

There was a general lull; two minutes by my watch (as I ascertained very improperly) it lasted—and two minutes seems very long before a set dinner. Suddenly, while I was yet gazing after our hostess, the door flew open, and I heard a voice repeat:—

“The Chevalier Seraphael and Mr. Burney!”

They entered calmly, as I could hear—not see, for my eyes seemed to turn in my head, and I involuntarily looked away. The former approached the hostess, who had advanced almost to the door to meet him, and apologized, but very slightly, for his late appearance, adding a few words in a lower tone which I could not catch. He was still holding his companion by the hand, and, before they

had time to part, the dinner was announced with state.

I lost sight of him, long before I obeyed the summons, leading a lady assigned to me a head taller than myself, who held a handkerchief in her hand that looked like a lace veil, and shook it in my face as we walked down the stairs. I can never sympathise with the abuse heaped upon these dinner-parties as I have heard, since I recall that especial occasion, not only grateful, but with a sense of its Arabian Night-like charm ;—the long table, glistening with damask too white for the eye to endure, the shining silver, the flashing crystal; the blaze and mitigated brightness; the pyramid of flowers, the fragrance, and the picture quiet.

As we passed in noiselessly and sat down one by one, I saw that the genius, apart from these, was seated by Miss Lawrence at the top of the table, and I was at the very bottom, though certainly, opposite. Starwood was on my own side, but far above me. I was constrained to talk with the lady I had seated next me, and, as she did not

disdain to respond at length, to listen while she answered ; but I was not constrained to look upon her, nor did I ; nor at anything but that face so long removed, so suddenly and inexplicably restored.

It is impossible to describe the nameless change that had crept upon those faultless features, nor how it touched me, clove to my heart within. Seraphael had entirely lost the fitting healthful bloom of his very early youth : a perfect paleness toned his face, as if with purity outshadowed, such pearly clearness flinging into relief the starry distance of his full, deep-coloured eyes ; the forehead more bare, more arched, was distinctly veined ; and the temples were of chiselled keenness : the cheek was thinner, the Hebrew contour more defined ; the countenance had gained in apparent calm, but when meeting his gaze you could peer into those orbs so evening-blue, their starlight was passionately restless.

He was talking to Miss Lawrence ; he scarcely ceased, but his conversation was evidently not that which imported anything to himself ; not

the least shade of change thwarted the paleness I have mentioned, which was that of watchfulness or of intense fatigue. She to whom he spoke, on the contrary, seemed passed into another form; she brightened more and more, she flashed, not only from her splendid eyes, but from her glowing cheek, her brilliant smile; she was on fire with joy that would not be extinguished; it assuredly was the time of "all her wealth," and, had her mood possessed no other charm, it would have excited my furious taste by its interesting contrast with his pale aspect and indrawn expression.

It was during dessert, when the converse had sprung up like a sudden air in a calm, when politeness quickened and elegance unconsciously thawed, that—as I watched the little hands I so loved gleaming in the purple of the grapes which the light fingers separated one by one—I passed insensibly to the countenance; it was smiling, and for me; a sudden light broke through the lips, which folded themselves again instantly, as if never

to smile again; but not until I had known the dawn of the old living expression, that though it had slept I felt now was able to awaken, and with more thankfulness than I can put into words. He was of those who stood at the door when the ladies withdrew, and after their retreat, he began to speak to me across the table, serving me with a skill I could not appreciate too delicately, to the merest trivialities, and making a sign to Starwood to take the chair now empty next me.

This was exactly what I wanted, for I had not seen him in the least—not that I was afraid he had altered, but that I was anxious to encounter him the same. Although still a little one, he had grown more than I expected; his blue eye was the same—the same his shrinking lip—but a great power seemed called out of both; he was exceedingly formed, muscular though delicate; his voice was that which I remembered, but he had caught Seraphael's accent, and, quite slightly, his style—only not his manner, which no one could approach or imitate. I learned from Star-

wood, as we sipped our single glass of wine, that the Chevalier had been to Miss Lawrence's that very morning.

* "He told me where he was going, and left me at the hotel; when he came back he said we were invited for to-night. Miss Lawrence had asked him to spend one evening, and he was engaged for every one but this. She was very sorry, she said, that her father had a party to-day. The Chevalier, however, did not mind he told her, and should be very happy to come anyhow."

"But how does it happen that he is so constantly engaged? it cannot be to concerts every evening?"

"Carl, you have no idea how much he is engaged; the rehearsals are to be every other day, and the rest of the evenings he has been worried into accepting invitations. I wish to goodness people would let him alone; if they knew what I know they would."

"What, my dear boy?"

"That for every evening he spends in company, he sits up half the night; I know it, for I have

watched that light under his door, and can hear him make the least little stir, when all is so quiet. At least, I could at Stralenfeld, where he stayed last, for my room was across the landing-place; and since we came to London, he told me he has not slept."

"I should think you might entreat him to do otherwise, Starwood, or at least request his friends to do so."

"He might have no friends so far as any influence they have goes. Just try yourself, Carl, and, when you see his face, you will not be inclined to do so any more."

"You spoke of rehearsals, Star, what may these be? I have not heard anything."

"I only know that he has brought with him two symphonies, three or four quartets, and a great roll of organ fugues, besides the score of his oratorio."

"I had no idea of such a thing. An oratorio?"

"It is what he wrote in Italy, some time ago, and only lately went over and prepared. It is in manuscript."

“ Shall we hear it ? ”

“ It is for the third or fourth week in June, but has been kept very quiet.”

“ How did Miss Lawrence come to know him ? she did not use to know him.”

“ She seems to know everybody, and to get her own way in everything. You might ask her ; she would tell you, and there would be no fear of her being angry.”

At last we rose. The lamps were lighted when we returned to the drawing-room ; it was nearly ten o'clock, but all was brilliant—festive. I had scarcely found a seat when Seraphael touched my shoulder.

“ I want very much to go, Charles. Will you come home with me ? I have all sorts of favours to ask of you, and that is the first.”

“ But Sir, Miss Lawrence is going to the piano ; will not you play first ? ”

“ Not at all to-night : we agreed. There are many here who would rather be excused from music ; they can get it at the opera.”

He laughed, and so did I. He then placed his

other hand on Starwood, still touching my shoulder, when Miss Lawrence approached,—

“ Sir, you know what you said, nor can I ask you to retract it. But may I say how sorry I am to have been so exacting this morning? It was a demand upon your time I would not have made had I known what I now know.”

“ What is that? pray have the goodness to tell me, for I cannot imagine.”

“ That you have brought with you what calls upon every one to beware how he or she engages you with trifles, lest they suffer from that repentance which comes too late. I hear of your great work, and shall rely upon you to allow me to assist you, if it be at all possible I can in the very least and lowest degree.”

She spoke earnestly, with an eager trouble in her air. He smiled serenely.

“ Oh! you quite mistake my motive, Miss Lawrence; it had not to do with music; it was because I have had no sleep that I wished to retire early, and you must permit me to make amends for my awkwardness. If it will not exhaust your guests,

as I see you were about to play, let me make the opening, and oblige me by choosing what you like best."

"Sir, I cannot refuse, selfish as I am, to permit myself such exquisite pleasure. There is another thirsty soul here who will be all the better for a taste of heavenly things."

She turned to me elated. I looked into his face; he moved to the piano, made no gesture either of impatience or satisfaction, but drew the stool to him, and when seated, glanced to Miss Lawrence, who stood beside him, and whispered something. I drew, with Starwood, behind, and where I could watch his hands.

He played for perhaps twenty minutes; an andante from Beethoven, an allegro from Mozart, an aria from Weber, cathedral echoes from Purcell, fugue-points from Bach, and, mixing them like gathered flowers, bound them together with a wild delicious Scherzo finale, his own. But, though that playing was indeed unto me as heaven in forecast, and though it filled the heart up to the

brim, it was extremely cold, and I do not remember ever feeling that he was separable from his playing before. When he arose so quietly, lifting his awful forehead from the curls that had fallen over it as he bent his face, he was unflushed as calm, and he instantly shook hands with Miss Lawrence, only leaving her to leave the room. I followed him naturally, remembering his request, but she detained me a moment to say,—

“ You must come and see me on Thursday, and must also come to breakfast. I shall be alone, and have something to show you. You are going along with him, I find—so much the better ; take care of him ; and good night.”

Starwood had followed Seraphael implicitly ; they were both below. We got into a carriage at the door, and were driven I knew not whither ; but it was enough to be with him, even in that silent mood.

With the same absent grace he ordered another bed-room when we stayed at his hotel. I could no

more have remonstrated with him than with a monarch when we found ourselves in the stately sitting-room.

"A pair of candles for the chamber," was his next command; and when they were brought he said to us, "The waiter will show you to your rooms, dear children; you must not wait a moment."

I could not—so I felt—object, nor entreat him himself to sleep. Starwood and I departed, and, whether it was from the novelty of the circumstances, or my own transcending happiness, or whether it was because I put myself into one of Starwood's dresses in default of my own, I do not conjecture; but I certainly could not sleep, and was forced to leave it alone.

I sat upright for an hour or two, and then rolled amongst the great hot pillows; I examined the register of the grate; I looked into the tall glass at my own double; but all would not exhaust me, and towards the very morning I left my bed, and made a sally upon the landing-place. I knew the number of Seraphael's door, for Starwood had

pointed it out to me as we passed along, and I felt drawn, as by odylie force, to that very metal lock.

There was no crack, but a key-hole, and the key-hole was bright as any star ; I peeped in also, and shall never forget my delight yet dread, to behold that outline of a figure which decided me to make an entrance into untried regions, upon inexperienced moods. Without any hesitation, I knocked, but, recalling to myself his temperament, I spoke simultaneously :—

“ Dear Sir, may I come in ? ”

Though I waited not for his reply, and opened the door quite innocent of the ghostly apparel I wore, and how very strange must have been my appearance. Never shall I forget the look that came home to me as I advanced more near him that indrawn, awful aspect, that sweetness without a smile.

The table was loaded with papers, but there was no strew—that “spirit” ever moulded to harmony its slightest “motion ;” one delicate hand was outspread over a sheet, a pen was in the other ;

he did not seem surprised, scarcely aroused. I rushed up to him precipitately.

"Dear, dearest Sir, I would not have been so rude, but I could not bear to think you might be sitting up, and I came to see. I pray you, for God's sake, do go to bed!"

"Carl, very Carl, little Carl, great Carl!" he answered, with the utmost gentleness, but still unsmiling, "why should I go to bed, and why shouldst thou come out of thine?"

"Sir, if it is anything, I cannot sleep while you are not sleeping, and while you ought to be besides."

"Is that it? How very kind, how good! I do not wake wilfully; but if I am awake I must work—thou knowest that. In truth, Carl, hadst thou not been so weary, I should have asked thee this very night what I must ask thee to-morrow morning."

"Ask me now Sir, for, if you remember, it *is* to-morrow morning already."

"Go, get into your bed, then."

"No, Sir, certainly not while you are sitting there."

A frown, like the shadow of a butterfly, floated over his forehead.

"If thou wilt have it so, I will even go to this naughty bed—but not to sleep. The fact is, Carl, I cannot sleep in London. I think that something in the air distresses my brain; it will *not* shut itself up. I was about to ask thee whether there is no country, nothing green, no pure wind, to be had within four miles?"

"Sir, you have hit upon a prodigious providence. There is, as I can assure you experimentally, fresh green, pure country air of heaven's own distilling, within that distance, and there is also much more—there is something you would like even better."

"What is that, Carlomein?"

"I will not tell you, Sir, unless you sleep to-night."

"To be sly becomes thee, precisely because thou art not a fox. I will lie down—but sleep

is God's best gift, next to love, and he has deprived me of both."

"If I be sly, Sir, you are bitter. But there is not too much sleight, nor bitterness either, where they can be expressed from words. So Sir, come to bed!"

"Well spoken, Carlomein — I am coming — sleep thou!"

But I would not, and I did not leave him until I had seen his head laid low in all the bareness of its beauty—had seen his large eyelids fall, and had drawn his curtains in their softest gloom around the burdened pillow. Then I, too, went back to bed, and I slept delectably and dreamless.

CHAPTER IV.

VERY late I slept, and before I had finished dressing, Starwood came for me. Seraphael had been down some time, he told me ; I was very sorry, but relieved to discover how much more of his old bright self he wore than on the previous evening.

“ Now, Carlomein,” he began immediately—
“ we are going on a pilgrimage directly after breakfast.”

I could tell he was excited, for he ate nothing, and was every moment at the window. To Starwood his abstinence seemed a matter of course, I was afraid indeed that it was no new thing. I could not remonstrate, however, having done quite enough in that line for the present. It was not

half-past ten when we found ourselves in an open carriage, into which the Chevalier sprang last, and in springing, said to me: "Give your own orders, Carlomein." I was for an instant lost, but recovered myself quite in time to direct before we drove from the hotel to the exact locality of Clara's cottage, unknowing whether I did well or ill, but determined to direct to no other place. As we passed from London and met the breeze from fields and gardens, miles and miles of flower-land, I could observe a clearing of Seraphael's countenance, its wan shadow melted, he seemed actually abandoned to enjoyment; though he was certainly in his silent mood, and only called out for my sympathy by his impressive glances as he stood up in the carriage with his hat off, and swaying to and fro. And when we reached, after a rapid exhilarating drive, the winding road with its summer-trees in youngest leaf, he only began to speak—he had not before spoken.

"How refreshing!" he exclaimed, "and what a lovely shade! I will surely not go on a step further, but remain here and make my bed. It

will be very unfortunate for me if all those pretty houses that I see are full, and how can we get at them?"

"I am nearly sure Sir, that you can live here if you like, or close upon this place; but if you will allow me I will go on first and announce your arrival to a friend of mine, who will be rather surprised at our all coming together, though she would be more happy than I could express for her, to welcome you at her house."

"It is then *that* I was brought to see—a friend of thine—thou hast not the assurance to tell me that any friend of thine will be glad to welcome another! But go, Carlomein!"—and he opened the carriage door—"go and get over thy meeting first; we will give thee time. Oh! Carlomein—I little thought what a man thou hadst grown when I saw thee so tall! get out, and go quickly; I would not keep thee now for all the cedars of Lebanon!"

I could tell his mood now very accurately, but it made no difference; I knew what I was about, or I thought I knew, and did not remain to answer.

I ran along the road—I turned the corner—the white gate shone upon me—and again I stopped to breathe. More roses—more narcissus lambent as lilies—more sweetness, and still more rest! The grass had been cut that morning, and lay in its little heaps all over the sunny lawn. The gravel was warm to my feet as I walked to the door, and long before the door was opened, I heard a voice.

So ardent did my desire expand to identify it with its owner, that I begged the servant not to announce me nor to disturb Miss Benette if singing. Thoné took the cue; gave me a kind of smile, and preceded me with a noiseless march to the very back parlour; I advanced on tiptoe and crouching forwards. Laura too was there, sitting at the table; she neither read nor worked, nor had anything in her hands, but with more tact than I should have expected from her only bowed, and did not move her lips. In the morning light my angel sat, and her notes full orbéd and star-like, descended upon my brain. Few notes I heard—she was just concluding—the strain ebbed as the memory of a kiss itself dissolving—but I heard

enough to know that her voice was indeed the realization of all her ideal promise. I addressed her as she arose, and told her, in very few words, my errand. She was perturbless as usual, and only looked enchanted, the enchantment betraying itself in the eye, not in any tremble or the faintest flush.

“Do bring them, Sir!” she said, “and as you say this gentleman has eaten nothing, I will try what I can do to make him eat. It is so important that I wonder you could allow him to come out until he had breakfasted,”—for I had told her of his impatience—“afterwards, if he likes, he can go to see the houses. There are several, I do believe, if they have not been taken since yesterday.”

I went back to the carriage, and it was brought on to the gate, I walking beside it. Thoné was waiting, and held it open—the sweet hay scented every breath.

“Oh, how delicious!” said Seraphael, as he alighted, standing still and looking around.

The meadows, the hedges, the secluded ways,

first attracted him ; and then the garden, which I thought he would never have overpassed—then the porch, in which he stood.

“ And this is England ! ” he exclaimed ; “ it is strange how unlike it is to that wild dream-country I went to when last I came to London. This is more like heaven, quiet and full of life ! ”

These words recalled to me Clara. He had put his head into the very midst of those roses that showered over the porch.

“ Oh ! I must gather one rose of all these—there are so many, she will never miss it.”

And then he laughed. A soft, soft echo of his laugh was heard—it startled me by its softness, it was so like an infant’s. I looked over my shoulder, and there, in the shadow of the hall, I beheld her,—her very self. It was she indeed who laughed, and her eye yet smiled. Without waiting for my introduction, she curtsied with a profound but easy air, and while, to match this singular greeting, Seraphael made his regal bow, she said looking at him, “ You shall have all the roses, Sir, and all

my flowers, if you will let my servant gather them, for I believe you might prick your fingers, there being also thorns. But while Thoné is at that work, perhaps you will like to walk in out of the sun, which is too hot for you, I am sure." She led us to the parlour where she had been singing—the piano still stood open.

"But," said Seraphael, taking the first chair as if it were his own; "we disturb you! What were you doing, you and Carl? I ask his pardon—Mr. Auchester."

"We two did nothing, Sir. I was only singing, but that can very well be put off till after breakfast, which will be ready in a few minutes."

Breakfast? I thought, but Clara's face told no tales—her loveliness was unruffled. The clear blue eye, the divine mouth, were evidently studies for Seraphael; he sat and watched her eagerly, even while he answered her.

"You look as if you had had breakfast!"

"Indeed I am very hungry, and so is my friend, Mr. Auchester."

"He always looks so, Mademoiselle!" replied

the Chevalier, mirthfully ; “ but I do really think he might be elegant enough to tell me your name. He has forgotten to do so in his embarrassment ; I cannot guess whether it be English, French or German, Italian, Greek or Hebrew.”

“ I am called Clara Benette, Sir, that is my name.”

“ It is not Benette—La Benetta Benedetta ? Carlomein, why hast thou so forgotten ? Allow me to congratulate you, Mademoiselle, on possessing the right to be so named. And for this do I give you joy ; that not for your gifts it has been bestowed, nor for that genius which is alone of the possessor, but for that goodness which I now experience, and feel to have been truly ascribed to you.”

He stood to her and held out his hand, calmly she gave hers to it, and gravely smiled.

“ Sir, I thank you the more because I *know* your name. I hope you will excuse me for keeping you so long without your breakfast.”

He laughed again, and again sat down ; but his manner, though of that playful courtliness, was

quite drawn out to her ; he scarcely looked at Laura ; I did not even believe that he was aware of her presence, nor was *I* aware of the power of his own upon her. After ten minutes Thoné entered, and went up to Clara : she motioned to us all then, and we arose ; but as she looked at Seraphael first, he took her out and into the dining-room. The table was snowed with damask—flowers were heaped up in the centre, a bowl of honeysuckles and heartsease ; the dishes here were white bread, brown bread, golden butter, new-laid eggs in a nest of moss, the freshest cream, the earliest strawberries ; and before the chair which Clara took stood a silver chocolate jug foaming, and coffee above a day-pale spirit-lamp. On the sideboard were garnished meat, and poultry already carved, the decanters, and still more flowers ; it was a feast raised as if by magic, and unutterably tempting at that hour of the day. Clara asked no questions of her chief guest, but pouring out both chocolate and coffee, offered them both ; he accepted the former, nor refused the wing of a chicken which Thoné

brought, nor the bread which Clara asked me to cut. I was perfectly astounded: she had helped herself also and was eating so quietly, after administering her delicious cups all round, that no one thought of speaking. At last, Starwood, by one of those unfortunate chances that befall timid people, spoke, and instantly turned scarlet, dropping his eyes forthwith, though he only said, "I never saw the Chevalier eat so much." Clara answered, with her fork in her dimpled hand, "That is because you gentlemen have had a long drive; it always raises the appetite to come out of London into the country. You cannot eat too much here."

"Do you think I shall find a house that will hold me and my younger son?" said Seraphael presently, pointing at Starwood his slight finger, "and a servant or two?"

"If you like to send my servant, Sir, she will find out for you."

"No, perhaps you will not dislike to drive a little way with us, I know Carl will be so glad!"

"We shall be most pleased, Sir," she answered,

quite quietly, though there was that in his expression which might easily have fluttered her. I could not at all account for this elfish mood, though I had been witness to freaks and fantasies in my boy-days. Never had I seen his presence affect any one so little as Clara. Had she not been of a loveliness so peculiarly genial, I should have called her cold; as it was, I felt he had never made himself more at home with any one in my sight. While, having graciously deferred to her the proposal for an instant search, he sauntered out into the little front garden, she went for her bonnet, and came down in it, a white straw, with a white satin ribbon and lining, and a little white veil of her own work, as I could tell directly I caught her face through its wavering and web-like tracery. Seraphael placed her in the carriage, and then looked back.

"Oh, Laura, that is Miss Lemark, is not coming," observed Miss Benette—this did not strike me except as a rather agreeable arrangement, and off we drove. Fritz, Seraphael's own man, was on the box—a perfect German, of very reserved de-

portment, who, however, one could see would have allowed Seraphael to walk upon him. His heavy demonstrations about situations and suitabilities made even Clara laugh, as they were met by Seraphael's wayward answers and skittish sallies. We had a very long round, and then went back to dinner with our lady ; but Seraphael, by the time the moon had risen, fell into May-evening ecstasies with a very old-fashioned tenement, built of black wood and girded by a quickset hedge, because it suddenly, in the silver shine, reminded him of his own house in Germany, as he said. It was so near the cottage, that two persons might even whisper together over the low and moss-greened garden-wall.

The invitation of Miss Lawrence I could not forget, even through the intenser fascination spread about me. I returned with Seraphael to town again, and again to the country ; he having thither removed his whole effects—so important though of so slight bulk, they consisting almost entirely of scored and other compositions which were safely deposited in a little empty room of the rambling house

he had chosen. This room he and Starwood and I soon made fit to be seen and inhabited, by our distribution of all odd furniture over it, and all the conveniences of the story. Three large country-scented bed-rooms, with beds big enough for three chevaliers in each, and two drawing-rooms, were all that we cared for besides. Seraphael was only like a child that night that is preparing for a whole holiday ; he wandered from room to room ; he shut himself into pantry, wine-cellar, and china-closet ; he danced like a day-beam through the low-ceiled sitting-chambers, and almost threw himself into the garden when he saw it out of the window. It was the wildest place, the walks all sown with grass, an orchard on a bank all moss, forests of fruit-trees and moss rose-bushes, and the great white lilies in ranks all round the close-fringed lawn ; all old-fashioned flowers in their favourite soils, a fountain and a grotto, and no end of weeping ashes, arbours bent from willows, and arcades of nut and filbert-trees. The back of the house was veiled with a spreading vine—too luxuriant—that shut out all but fresh green light from the

upper bed-rooms ; but Seraphael would not have a spray cut off, nor did he express the slightest dissatisfaction at being overlooked by the chimneys and roof-hung windows of Clara's little cottage which peeped above the hedge. The late inhabitant and present owner of the house, an eccentric gentlewoman who abjured all innovation, had desired that no change should pass upon her tenement during her absence for a sea-side summer ; even the enormous mastiff, chained in the yard to his own house, was to remain barking or baying as he listed ; and we were rather alarmed, Starwood and I, to discover that Seraphael had let him loose, in spite of the warnings of the housekeeper who rustled her scant black silk skirts against the doorstep in anger and in dread. I was about to make some slight movement in deprecation, for the dog was fiercely strong and of a tremendous expression indeed, but he only lay down before the Chevalier and licked the leather of his boots, afterwards following him over the whole place until darkness came, when he howled on being tied up again until Seraphael carried him a bone from our supper-

table. Our gentle master retired to rest, and his candle-flame was lost in the moonlight, long before I could bring myself to go to bed. I can never describe the satisfaction, if not the calm, of lying between two poles of such excitement as the cottage and that haunted mansion.

CHAPTER V.

SERAPHAEL had desired me to stay with him, therefore the next morning I intended to give up my London lodgings on the road to Miss Lawrence's square, or rather out of the road. When I came down stairs into the sun-lit breakfast-room, I found Starwood alone, and writing to his father ; but no Chevalier. Nor was he in his own room, for the sun was streaming through the vine-shade on the tossed bed-clothes, and the door and window were both open as I descended. Starwood said that he had gone to walk in the garden, and that we were not to wait for him—"What, without his breakfast?" said I. But Starwood smiled, such a mean-

ing smile that I was astonished, and could only sit down.

We ate and drank, but neither of us spoke: I was anxious to be off, and Star to finish his letter, though as we both arose and were still alone, he yet looked naughty. I would not pretend to understand him, for if he has a fault, that darling friend of mine, it is that he sees through people rather too soon, construing their intentions before they inform experience.

I could not make up my mind to ride, but set off on foot along the sun-glittering road, through emerald shades, past gold-flecked meadows, till through the mediant chaos of brick-fields and dust-heaps, I entered the dense halo surrounding London—"smoke the tiar of commerce,"—as a pearl of poets has called it. The square looked positively lifeless when I came there, I almost shrank from my expedition, not because of any fear I had on my own account, but because all the inhabitants might have been asleep, behind the glaze of their many windows.

I was admitted noiselessly, and as if expected

shown into the drawing-room, so large, so light, and splendid in the early sun. All was noiseless, too, within; an air of affluent calm pervaded as an atmosphere itself the rich-grouped furniture, the piano closed, the stools withdrawn. I was not kept two minutes; Miss Lawrence entered, in the act of holding out her hand. I was instantly at home with her, though she was one of the grandest persons I ever saw. She accepted my arm, and, not speaking, took me to a landing higher, and to a room which appeared to form one of a suite, for a curtain extended across one whole side, a curtain as before an oratory in a dwelling-house.

Breakfast was outspread here; on the walls, a pale sea-green, shone delectable pictures in dead-gold frames, pictures even to an inexperienced eye, pure relics of art. The windows had no curtains, only a broad gold cornice; the chairs were damask, white and green; the carpet oak-leaves, on a lighter ground. It was evidently a retreat of the lesser art; it could not be called a boudoir, neither ornament nor mirror, vase nor bookstand, broke the prevalent array. I said I had break-

fasted, but she made me sit by her and told me.—

“I have not, and I am sure you will excuse me. One must eat, and I am not so capable to exist upon little as you are. Yet you shall not sit, if you would rather see the pictures, because there are not too many to tire you in walking round. Too many together is a worse mistake than too few.”

I arose immediately, but I took opportunity to examine my entertainer in pauses as I moved from picture to picture. She wore black brocaded silk this morning, with a Venetian chain and her watch, and a collar all lace; her hair, the blackest I had ever seen except Maria's, was coiled in snake-like wreaths to her head so small behind, while it arched so broadly and benevolently over her noble eyes. She was older than I had imagined, and may have been forty at that time, the only observation one could retain about the fact being, that her gathered years had but served to soften every crudity of an extremely decided organization, and to crown wisdom with refinement.

She soon pushed back her cup and plate, and came to my side. She looked suddenly, a little anxiously, at me.

“You must be rather curious to know why I asked you to come to me to-day; and were you not a gentleman, you would have been also curious, I fancy, to know why I could not see you on Tuesday. I want you to come this way.”

I followed; she slid the curtain along its rings, and we entered the oratory. I know not that it was so far unlike such precinct, for from thence art reared her consecrated offerings to the presence of every beauty. I felt this, and that the artist was pure in heart, even before her entire character faced my own. The walls here, of the same soft marine shade, were also lighted by pictures; the strangest, the wildest, the least assorted, yet all according.

A peculiar and unique style was theirs; each to each presented the atmosphere of one imagination. Dark and sombrous woods, moon-pierced, gleamed dusky from a chain where they were standing frameless—resting against them a crowd of baby

faces clustered in a giant flower-chalice—a great lotus was the hieroglyph of a third—on the walls faces smiled or frowned, huge profiles—dank pillars mirrored in rushy pools—fragments of heathen temples—domes of diaphanous distance in a violet sky—awful palms—dread oceans, with the last ghost-shadow of a wandering wreck. I stood lost, unaccustomed either to the freaks or the triumphs of pictorial art; I could only say in my amaze, “Are these all yours? How wonderful!” She smiled very carelessly.

“I did not intend you to look at those, except askance, if you were kind enough. I keep them to advertise my own deficiencies, and to compare the present with the past. The present is very aspiring, and *for* the present devours my future. I hope it will dedicate itself thereunto. I wish you to come here, to this light.”

She was placed before an immense easel to the right of a large-paned window, where the best London day streamed above the lower dimness. An immense sheet of canvas was turned away from us upon the easel; but in a moment she had

placed it before us, and fell back in the same moment, a little from me.

Nor shall I ever forget that moment's issue. I forgot it was a picture, and all I could feel was a trance-like presence brought unto me in a day-dream of immutable satisfaction. On either side, the clouds light golden and lucid crimson passed into a central sphere of the perfect blue. And reared into that, as it were the empyrean of the azure, gleamed in full relief the head, life-sized of Seraphael. The bosom white-vested, the regal throat, shone as the transparent depths of the moon, not moonlight, against the blue unshadowed. The clouds deeper, heavier, and of a dense violet, were rolled upon the rest of the form ; the bases of those clouds as livid as the storm, but their edges where they flowed into the virgin raiment, sun-fringed, glittering. The visage was raised, the head thrown back into the ether, but the eyes were drooping, the snow-sealed lips at rest. The mouth faint crimson, thrilling, spiritual, appalled by its utter reminiscence ; the smile so fiery-soft just touched the lips unparted. No symbol strewed

the cloudy calm below, neither lyre, laurel-wreathed nor flowery chaplet, but on either side, where the clouds parted in wavering flushes and golden pallors, two hands of light, long, lambent, life-like, but not earthly, held over the brow a crown.

Passing my eye among the cloud-lights—for I cannot call them shadows—I could just gather with an eager vision, as one gathers the thready moon-crescent in a mid-day sky, that on either side a visage gleamed, veiled and drenched also in the rose-golden mist.

One countenance was dread and glorious, of sharp-toned ecstasy that cut through the quivering medium, a self-sheathed Seraph—the other was mild and awful, informed with steadfast beauty, a shining Cherub. They were Beethoven and Bach, as they might be known in Heaven, but who, except the musician, would have known them for themselves on earth? It was not for me to speak their names—I could not utter them: my heart was dry; I was thirsty for the realization of that picture promise.

The crown they uplifted in those soft shining hands was a circle of stars, gathered to each other out of that heavenly silence, and into the azure vague arose that brow, over which the conqueror's sign, suspended, shook its silver terrors. For such awful fancies shivered through the brain upon its contemplation, that I can but call it *transcendental*—beyond expression; the feeling, the fear, the mystery of starlight, pressed upon the spirit, and gave new pulses to the heart. The luminous essence from the large white points seemed rained upon that forehead and upon the deep tints of the god-like locks; they turned all clear upon their orbbed clusters, they melted into the radiant halo which flooded, yet as with a glory one could not penetrate, the impenetrable elevation of the lineaments.

I dared only gaze; had I spoken I should have wept, and I would not disturb the image by my tears. I soon perceived how awfully the paintress had possessed herself of the aspiration, the melancholy, and the joy. The crown indeed was grounded upon rest, and of unbroken splendour;

but it beamed upon the aspect of exhaustion and longing strife, upon lips yet thirsty, and imploring patience.

I suppose my silence satisfied the artist, for before I had spoken or even unriveted my gaze, she said, herself—

“ That I have worked upon for a year. I was allowing myself to dream one day—just such a day as this—last spring ; and insensibly my vision framed itself into form. The faces came before I knew, at least those behind the clouds, and having caught them, I conceived the rest. I could not, however, be certain of my impressions about the chief countenance, and I waited with it unfinished enough until the approach of the season, for I knew he was coming now, and before he arrived I sent him a letter to his house in Germany. I had a pretty business to find out the address, and wrote to all kinds of persons, but at last I succeeded, and my suit was also successful. I had asked him to sit to me.”

“ Then you had not known him before ? You did not know him all those years ? ”

"I had seen him often, but never known him. Oh yes! I had seen his face. You have a tolerable share of courage, could you have asked him such a favour?"

"You see, Miss Lawrence, I have received so many favours from him without asking for them. Had I possessed such genius as yours, I should not only have done the same, but have felt to do it was my duty. It is a portrait for all the ages, not only for men but for angels."

"Only for angels, if fit at all. For that face is something beyond man's utmost apprehension of the beautiful. It must ever remain a solitary idea to any one who has received it. You will be shocked if I tell you that his beauty prevails more with *me* than his music."

"But is it not the immediate consequence of such musical investment?"

"I believe, on the contrary, that the musical investment, as you charmingly express it, is the direct consequence of the lofty organization."

“That is a new notion for me, I must turn it over before I take it home. I would rather consider the complement of his gifts to be that heavenly heart of his which endows them each and all with what must live for ever in unaltered perfection.”

“And it pleases me to feel that he is of like passions with us, protected from the infraction of laws celestial by the image of the Creator still conserved to his mortal nature, and stamping it with a character beyond the age. But about his actual advent. He answered my letter in person: I was certainly appalled to hear of his arrival, and that he was down stairs. I was up here muddling with my brushes, without knowing what to be at;—up comes my servant—

“Mr. Seraphael.”

“Imagine such an announcement! I descend—we meet—for the first time in private, except, indeed, on the occasion when his shadow was introduced to me, as you may remember. He was in the drawing-room, pale from travelling, full of the langour left by sea-sickness, looking like a spirit

escaped from prison. I was almost ashamed of my daring, far more so than alarmed. I thought he was about to appoint a day—but no. He said—

“‘I am at your service this morning, if it suits you, but as you did not favour me with your address, I could not arrange beforehand. I went to my music-sellers, and asked them about you. I need not tell you that you were known there, and that I am much obliged to them.’

“Actually it was a fact that I had not furnished him with my address, but I was perfectly innocent of my folly. What could I do but not lose a moment? I asked him to take refreshment; no, he had breakfasted or dined or something, and we came up here directly. I never saw such behaviour. He did not even inquire what I was about, but sat like a god in marble just where I had placed him—out there. You perceive that I have lost the eyes, or at least have rendered them up to mystery. Well, when having caught the outline of the forehead and touched the temples, I descended to those eyes and saw they were full upon me, I could do nothing with them. I

cannot paint light, only its ghost ; nor fire, only its shade. His eyes are at once fire and light, I know of which the most ; or, at least, that which is the light of fire. Even the streaming lashes scarcely tempered the radiance there. I let them fall, and veiled what one scarcely dares to meet, at least I. He sat to me four hours, but though I knew not how the time went, and may be forgiven for inconsideration, I had no idea that he was going straight to the Committee of the Choir-day, on the top of that sitting. I kept him long enough for what I wanted, and as he did not ask to see the picture, I did not show it him. He shall see it when it is finished."

"What finish does it require ? I see no change that it can need to carry out the likeness, which is all we want."

"Oh yes ! more depth in the darkness, and more glory in the light ; less electric expression, more ideal serenity ; above all, more pain upon the forehead, more peace about the crown. Moonlight without a moon, sunshine without the solar rays—the day of Heaven."

"I can only say, Miss Lawrence, that you deserve to be able to do as you have done, and to feel that no one else could have done it."

"Very exclusive that feeling, but perhaps necessary. I have it, but my deserts will only be transcended if Seraphael himself shall approve. And now for another question—Will you go with me to this Choir-day?"

"I am trying to imagine what you mean. I have not heard the name until you spoke it. Is it in the North?"

"Certainly not, though even York Minster would not be a bad notion, that is to say, it would suit our Beethoven exactly, but this is another Hierarch. What do you think of an oratorio in Westminster Abbey, the conductor our own, the whole affair of his? no wonder you have heard nothing, it has been kept very snug, and was only arranged by the interposition of various individuals whose influence is more of mammon than of art; the objection at first being chiefly on the part of the profession, but that is over-ruled by their being pretty nearly every one included in the orchestra.

Such a thing is never likely to occur again. Say that you will go with me. If it be anything to you, I shall give you one of the best seats in the very centre, where you will see and hear better than most people; imagine the music in that place of tombs, it is a melancholy but glorious project, may we realize it!"

I could not at present, it was out of the question, nor could I bear to stay, there was nothing for it but to make haste out, where the air made solitude. I bade the paintress good morning, and quitted her: I believe she understood my frame.

CHAPTER VI.

I WALKED home also, and was tolerably tired—entering the house as one at home there, I found nobody at home, no Starwood, no Chevalier. I lay upon the sofa in a day-dream or two, and when rested, went out into the garden. I searched every corner too, in vain, but wandering past the dividing hedge, a voice floated articulately over the still afternoon.

All was calm and warm, the slightest sound made way; and I hesitated not to scale the green barrier, nowhere too high for me to leap it, and to approach the parlour of the cottage in that unwonted fashion. I was in for pictures this

while, I suppose, for when I reached the glass-doors that swept the lawn wide open, and could peep through them without disturbing foot on that soft soil, I saw indeed another, a less impressive, not less expressive view. Clara sat at her piano, her side-face was in the light; his own, which I was sure to find there, in profile also, was immediately behind her; but as he stood the shade had veiled him, the shade from the trembling leaves without, through which one sunbeam shot, and upon the carpet kissed his feet. She was singing, as I could hear, scarcely see, for her lips opened not more than for a kiss, to sing. The strains moulded themselves imperceptibly, or as a warble shaken in the throat of a careless nightingale, that knew no listener.

Seraphael, as he stood apart drinking in the notes with such eagerness that his lips were also parted, had never appeared to me so borne out of himself, so cradled in a second nature. I could scarcely have believed that the face I knew so well had yet an expression hidden I knew not of, but it was so, kindled at another fire than that

which his genius had stolen from above, his eye was charged, his cheek flushed.

So exquisitely beautiful they looked together, he in that soft shadow, she in that tremulous light, that at first I noticed not a third figure, now brought before me. Behind them both, but sitting so that she could see his face, was Laura or rather she half lay—some antique figures carved in statuary have an attitude as listless, that bend on monuments, or crouch in relieve. She had both her arms outspread upon the little work-table, hanging over the edge, the hands just clasped together, as reckless in repose; her face all colourless, her eyes all clear but with scarcely more tinting, were fixed, rapt, upon Seraphael.

I could not tell whether she were feeding upon his eye, his cheek, or his beauteous hair; all her life came forth from her glance, but it spent itself without expression. Still that deep, that feeding gaze, was enough for me; there was in it neither look of hope nor of despair as I could have interpreted it. I did not like to advance, and

waited till my feet were stiff—but neither could I retire.

I waited while Clara, without comment on her part, or request on his, glided from song to scena, from the romance of a wilderness to the simplest troll. Her fingers just touched the keys as we touch them for the violin solo, supporting, but unnoticeable. At last, when afraid to be caught—for the face of the Chevalier in its new expression I rather dreaded—I went back like a thief, the way I came, and still more like a thief in that I carried away a treasure of remembrance from those who knew not they had lost it.

I found Starwood yet out, and roved very impatiently all over the house until, at perhaps five o'clock, Seraphael came in for something. The dog in the yard barked out, but I was in no humour to let him loose, and ran straight into the hall.

“Carlomein,” said the Chevalier, “I thought you were in London. Is it possible, my child, that you have not dined,”—and he gave orders for an

instant preparation. "I am truly vexed that I did not know it, but Sterne is gone to his father, and will stay till the last coach to-night. I thought you would be absent also."

"And so, Sir, I suppose you had determined to go without your dinner."

He smiled.

"Not at all, Carlomein. The fact is I *have* dined. I could not resist La Benetta Benedetta. I never knew what young potatoes were until I tasted them over there."

"I dare say not," I thought, but I was wise enough to hold my tongue.

"Then, Sir, I shall dine alone, and very much I shall enjoy it. There is nothing I like so well as dining alone, except to dine alone with you."

"Carl! Carl! hadst thou been in that devil when he tempted Eve! Pardon, but I have come home for a few things, and have promised to return."

"Sir, if you will not think it rude, I must say,

that for once in your life, you are enjoying what you confer upon others. I am so glad !”

“ I thought it says, ‘ it is better to give than to receive.’ I do like receiving; but perhaps that is because I cannot give this which I now receive. Carlomein, there is a spell upon thee ; there is a charm about thee, that makes thee lead all thou lovest to all they love ! it is a thing I cannot comprehend, but am too content to feel.”

He ran into his study, and returning, just glanced into the room with an air of allegresse to bid me adieu ; but what had he in his arms if it were not the score of his oratorio ? I knew its name by this time ; I saw it in that nervous writing which I could read at any earthly distance—what was to be done with it, and what then ? was he going to the rehearsal, or to a rehearsal of his own ?

I had not been half an hour quiet, playing to myself, having unpacked my fiddle for the first time since I came to London ; when the lady of the scanty silk arrived at my door, and aroused me. Some gentlemen had called to see the Chevalier,

and as he was supposed to be absent, must see me. I went down into a great dampish dining-room we had not lived in at all, and found three or four worthies, a deputation from the band and chorus, who had helplessly assembled two hours ago in London, and were at present waiting for the Conductor.

It was no pleasant task to infringe the fragrant privacy of the cottage, but I had to do it; I went to the front gate this time, and sent up a message, that I might not render myself more intrusive than necessary. He came down as upon the wings of the wind, with his hat half falling from his curls and flew to the deputation without a syllable to me;—they carried him off in triumph, so immediately that I could only fancy he looked annoyed and may have been about that matter mistaken.

Certainly Clara was not annoyed, whom I went in-doors to see; Laura had vanished, and she herself was alone in the room, answering my first notes of admiration, merely, "Yes, I have sung to him a good while." I was, however, so struck by the

change, not in manner, but in her mien, that I would stay on to watch, at the risk of being in the way more than ever in my days. Since I had entered, she had not once looked up; but an unusual flush was upon her face, she appeared serious, but intent—something seemed to occupy her. At last, after turning about the music-sheets that strewed the chamber everywhere, and placing them by in silence—and a very long time she took—she raised her eyes. Their lustre was indeed quickened; never saw I so much excitement in them; they were still not so grave as significant—full of unwonted suggestions. I ventured to say then—

“And now, Miss Benette, I may ask you what you feel about the personality of this hero?”

I could not put it better: she replied not directly, but came and sat beside me on the sofa by the window. She laid her little hands into her lap, and her glance followed after them; I could see she was inexpressibly burdened with some inward revelation. I could not for a moment believe she trembled, but certainly there was a

quiver of her lips—her silken curls so calm did not hide the pulsation, infantinely rapid, of those temples where the harebell-azure veins pencilled the rose-flower skin. After a few moments' pause, during which she evidently collected herself, she addressed me, her own sweet voice as clear as ever, but the same trouble in it that touched her gaze.

"Sir, I am going to tell you something, and to ask your advice besides."

"I am all attention!" indeed, I was in an agony to attend and learn.

"I have had a strange visitor this morning—very sudden, and I was not prepared. You will think me very foolish, when you hear what is the matter with me, that I have not written to Mr. Davy, but I prefer to ask you. You are more enlightened, though you are so young."

"Miss Benette, I know your visitor, for on returning home next door, I missed my master, and I knew he could be only here. What has he done that could possibly raise a difficulty, or said

that could create a question ? He is my unerring faith, and should be yours."

" I do not wonder ; but I have not known him so long, you see, and contemplate him differently. I had been telling him, as he requested to know my plans, of the treatment I had received at the opera, and how I had not quite settled whether to come out now or next year as an actress. He answered,

" Do neither."

I inquired, why ?

" You must not accept any engagement for the stage in England, and pray do not hold out to them any idea that you will."

" Now, what does he mean ? Am I to give up my only chance of being able to live in England ? for I wish to live here. And am I to act unconscientiously ? for my conscience tells me that the pure-hearted should always follow their impulses. Now I know very few persons, but I am born to be known of many, at least I suppose so, or why was I gifted with this voice, my only gift ?"

"Miss Benette, you cannot suppose the Chevalier desires your voice to be lost. Has he not been informing and interpenetrating himself with it the whole morning? He has a higher range in view for you, be assured or he had not persuaded you, *I* am certain, to annul your present privileges. He has the right to will what he pleases."

"And are we all to obey him?"

"Certainly; and only him, in matters musical. If you knew him as I do, you would feel this."

"But is it like a musician, to draw me away from my duty?"

"Not obviously; but there may be no duty here. You do not know how completely, in the case of dramatic, and, indeed, of all other art, the foundations are out of course."

"You mean they do not fulfil their first intentions. But then nothing does, except certainly, as it was first created. We have lost that long."

"Music, Miss Benette, it appears to me, so long

as it preserves its purity, may consecrate all the forms of art by raising them into its own atmosphere—govern them as the soul the body. But where music is itself degraded—its very type defaced—its worship rendered ridiculous—its nature mere name: by its own master the rest falls. I know not much about it, but I know how little the drama depends on music in this country, and how completely, in the first place, one must lend one's self to its meanest effect in order to fulfil the purpose of the writer. All writers for the stage have become profane; and dramatic writers whom we still confess to, are banished from the stage in proportion to the elevation of their works. I even go so far as to think an artist does worse who lends an incomparable organ to such service than an unheeded player (myself for example), who should form one in the ranks of such an orchestra as that of our opera-houses, where the bare notion or outline of harmony is all that is provided for us. While the idea of the highest prevails with us, our artist-life must harmonize, or Art will suffer,—and it suffers enough now. I have said too long a say,

and perhaps I am very ignorant, but this is what I think."

"You cannot speak too much, Sir, and you know a great deal more than I do. My feeling was, that I could perhaps have shown the world that simplicity of life is not interfered with by a public career; and that those who love what is beautiful, must also love what is good, and endeavour to live up to it besides. I have spoken to several musicians abroad, who came to me on purpose; they all extolled my voice, and entreated me to sing upon the stage. I did so then, because I was poor, and had several things I wished to do; but I cannot say I felt at home with music on the stage in Italy. The gentleman who was here to day was the first who disturbed my ideas, and dissuaded me. I was astonished, not because I am piqued, —for you do not know how much I should prefer to live a quiet life—but because everybody else had told me a different story. I do not like to think I shall only be able to sing in concerts, for there are very few concerts that content me, and I do so love an orchestra. Am I to give it all up? If

this gentleman had said, 'Only sing in this opera, or that,' I could have made up my mind. But am I never to sing in any? Am I to waste my voice that God gave me, as he gives to others a free hand, or a great imagination? You cannot think so, with all your industry, and all your true enthusiasm."

"Miss Benette, you must not be shocked at what I shall now say, because I mean it with all reverence. I could no more call in question the decision of such genius than I could that of Providence if it sent me death-sickness or took away my friends. I am certain that the motive, which you cannot make clear just yet, is that you would approve of."

"And you also, Sir?"

"And I also, though it is as dark to me as to you. Let it stand over then, but for all our sakes do not thwart him; he has suffered too much to be thwarted."

"Has he suffered? I did not know that."

"Can such a one live and not suffer? A nature which is all love—an imagination all music."

"I thought that he looked delicate, but very happy—happy as a child or an angel. I have seen your smile turn bitter, Sir, pardon ! but never his. I am sure if it matters to him that I should accede, I will do so, and I cannot thank you enough for telling me."

"Miss Benette, if you are destined to do anything great for music, it may be in one way as well as in another ; that is, if you befriend the greatest musician, it is as much as if you befriended music. Now you cannot but befriend him if you do exactly as he requests you."

"In all instances you recommend?"

"I, at least, could refuse him nothing. The nourishment such a spirit requires is not just the same as our own, perhaps, but it must not the less be supplied. If I could, now, clean his boots better than any one else, or if he liked my cookery, I would give up what I am about and take a place in his service."

"What! you would give up your violin, your career, your place among the Choir of Ages?"

“ I would, for in rendering a single hour of his existence on earth unfretted—in preserving to him one day of ease and comfort—I should be doing more for all people, all time, at least for the ideal, who will be few in every age, but many in all the ages ; and who I believe leaven society better than a priesthood. I would not say so except to a person who perfectly understands me ; for as I hold laws to be necessary, I would infringe no social or religious regime by one heterodox utterance to the ear of the uninitiated ; still, having said it, I keep to my text, that you must do exactly as he pleases. He has not set a seal upon your throat at present, if you have been singing all the morning.”

“ I have been singing from his new great work. There is a contralto solo, ‘ Art thou not from Everlasting ? ’ which spoiled my voice ; I could not keep the tears down, it was so beautiful and entreating. He was a little angry at me ; at least he said, ‘ You must not do that.’ There is also a very long piece which I scarcely tried, we had been so long over the other, which he made me sing again

and again until I composed myself. What a mercy Mr. Davy taught us to read so fast! I have found it help me ever since. Do you mean to go to this oratorio?"

"I am to go with Miss Lawrence. How noble, how glorious she is!"

"Your eyes sparkle when you speak of her. I knew you would there find a friend."

"I hope you, too, will hear it, Miss Benette. I shall speak to the Chevalier about it."

"I pray you not to do so; there will not be any reason, for I find out all about those affairs. Take care of yourself, Mr. Auchester, or rather make Miss Lawrence take care of you; she will like to have to do so."

"I must go home if it is not to be just yet, and return on purpose for the day."

"But that will fatigue you very much; cannot you prevent it? One ought to be quiet before a great excitement."

"Oh! you have found that; I cannot be quiet until afterwards."

"I have never had a great excitement," said

Clara, 'innocently, "and I hope I never may. It suits me to be still."

"May that calm remain in you and for you • with which you never fail to heal the soul within your power, Miss Benette!"

"I should indeed be proud, Mr. Auchester, to keep you quiet, but that you will never be until it is for ever."

"In that sense no one could, for who could ever desire to awaken from that rest? and from all rest here it is but to awaken."

I felt I ought to go, or that I might even remain too long. It was harder at that moment to leave her than it had ever been before, but I had a prescience that for that very reason it was better to depart. Starwood had returned, I found, and was waiting about in the evening, before the candles came.

We both watched the golden shade that bound the sunset to its crimson glow, and then the violet dark as it melted downwards to embrace the earth. We were both silent, Starwood from habit (I have never seen such power of abstraction), I by choice.

An agitated knock came suddenly, about nine, and into the room bounced the big dog, tearing the carpet up with his capers. Seraphael followed, silent at first as we; he stole after us to the window, and looked softly forth. I could tell even in the uncertain silver darkness of that thinnest shell of a moon, that his face was alight with happiness, an ineffable gentleness—not the dread alien air of heaven—soothed the passion of his countenance. He laid for long his tiny hand upon my shoulder, his arm crept round my neck, and drawing closer still, he sighed rather than said, after a thrilling pause—

“Carlomein, wilt thou come into my room? I have a secret for thee; it will not take long to tell.”

“The longer the better, Sir.”

We went out through the dark drawing-room, we came to his writing-chamber; here the white sheets shone like ghosts in the bluish-blackness, for we were behind the sunset.

“We will have no candles, because we shall return so soon. And I love secrets told in the dark,

or between the dark and light. I have prevented that child from taking her own way. It was very naughty, and I want to be shriven. Shrive me, Charles."

"In all good part, Sir, instantly."

"I have been quarrelling with the manager. He was very angry, and his whiskers stood out like the bristles of a cat, for I had snatched the mouse from under his paw, you see."

"The mouse must have been glad enough to get away, Sir. And you have drawn a line through her engagement? She has told me something of it, and we are grateful."

"I have cancelled her engagement! Well, this one—but I am going to give her another. She does not know it, but she will sing for me at another time. Art thou angry, Carl? Thou art rather a dread confessor."

"I could not do anything but rejoice, Sir. How little she expects to bear such a part! She is alone fitted for it; an angel, if he came into her heart, could not find one stain upon his habitation."

"The reason you take home to you, then, Carlomein?"

"Sir, I imagine that you consider her wanting in dramatic power, or that as a dramatic songstress under the present dispensation, she would but disappoint herself, and perhaps ourselves. Or that she is too delicately organized, which is no new notion to me."

"All of these reasons, and yet not one. Not even because, Carlomein, in all my efforts I have not written directly for the stage, nor because a lingering recollection ever forbids profane endeavour. There is yet a reason, obvious to myself, but which I can scarcely make clear to you. Though I would have you know, and learn as truth, that there is nothing I take from this child I will not restore to her again; nor shall she have the lesson to be taught to feel, that in Heaven alone is happiness."

He made a long, long pause; I was in no mood to reply, and it was not until I was ashamed of my own silence that I spoke; then my own accents startled me. I told Seraphael I must return

on the morrow to my own place if I were to enjoy at length what Miss Lawrence had set before me. He replied, that I must come back to him when I came, and that he would write to me meantime.

"If I can, Carlomein; but I cannot always write, even, my child, to thee. There is one thing more between us, a little end of business."

He lit with a waxen match a waxen taper, which was coiled into a brazen cup—he brought it from the mantleshef to the table—he took a slip of paper and a pen. The tiny flame threw out his hand, of a brilliant ivory, while his head remained in flickering shadow—I could trace a shadow-smile.

"Now, Carlomein, this brother of yours. His name is David, I think!"

"Lenhart Davy, Sir."

"Has he many musical friends?"

"Only his wife, particularly so—the class are all neophytes."

"Well, he can do as he pleases. Here is an order."

He held out the paper in a regal attitude, and in the other hand brought near the tremulous taper, that I so might read. It was—"Abbey Choir, Westminster. Admit Mr. Lenhart Davy and party. 21st June. Seraphael." I could say nothing, nor even essay to thank him; indeed he would not permit it as I could perceive. We returned directly to the drawing-room, and roused Starwood from a blue study as the Chevalier expressed it.

"I am ready, and Miss Lemark is tired of waiting for both of us," said Miss Lawrence, as she entered, that crown of days, the studio. "I have left her in the drawing-room, and by the way, though it is nothing to the purpose, she has dressed herself very prettily."

"I do not think it is nothing to the purpose—people dress to go to church, and why not then, to honour music? You have certainly succeeded also, Miss Lawrence, if it is not impertinent that I say so."

"It is not impertinent. You will draw out the

colours of that bit of canvas, if you gaze so ardently."

It was not so easy to refrain. That morning the pictured presence had been restored to its easel framed, and ready for inspection. I had indeed lost myself in that contemplation; it was hard to tear myself from it even for the embrace of the reality. The border, dead gold, of great breadth and thickness, was studded thickly with raised bright stars, polished and glittering as points of steel. The effect thus seemed conserved and carried out where in general it abates. I cannot express the picture; it was finished to that high degree which conceals its own design, and mantles mechanism with pure suggestion. I turned at length and followed the paintress, my prospects more immediate rushed upon me.

Our party, small and select as the most seclusive spirit could ask for, consisted of Miss Lawrence and her father, a quiet but genuine amateur he—of Miss Lemark, whom my friend had included without a question, with Starwood and

myself. We had met at Miss Lawrence's, and went together in her carriage. She wore a deep blue muslin dress, blue as that summer heaven; her scarf was gossamer, the hue of the yellow butterfly, and her bonnet was crested with feathers drooping like golden hair. Laura was just in white; her Leghorn hat lined with grass-green gauze; a green silk scarf waved around her. Both ladies carried flowers. Geraniums and July's proud roses were in Miss Lawrence's careless hand, and Laura's bouquet was of myrtle and yellow jessamine.

We drove in that quiet mood which best prepares the heart. We passed so street by street until at length, and long before we reached it, the grey Abbey towers beckoned us from beyond the houses, seeming to grow distant as we approached as shapes of unstable shadow, rather than time-fast masonry.

Into the precinct we passed; we stayed at the mist-hung door. It was the strangest feeling—mere physical sensation—to enter, from that searching heat, those hot blue heavens; into the

cool, the dream of dimness, where the shady marbles clustered, and the foot fell dread and awfully, where hints more awful pondered, and for our coming waited. Yea, as if from far and very far, as if beyond the grave descending, fell wondrous unwonted echoes from the tuning choir unseen. Involuntarily we paused to listen, and many others paused; those of the quick hand or melodious forehead, those of the alien aspect who ever draw after music. Now the strings yearned fitfully, a sea of softest dissonances; the wind awoke and moaned; the drum detonated and was still; past all the organ swept, a thundering calm.

Entering, still hushed and awful, the centre of the nave, we caught sight of the transept already crowded with hungering, thirsting faces; still they too, and all there hushed and awful. The vision of the choir itself, as it is still preserved to me, is as a picture of Heaven to infancy. What more like one's idea of Heaven than that height, that aspiring form?—the arches whose sun-kissed summits glowed in distance, whose vista stretched its boun-

daries from the light of rainbows at one end, on the other to the organ, music's archetype? Not less powerful—predominating—this idea of our other home, because no earthly flowers nor withering garlands made the thoughts recoil on death and destiny. The only flowers there, the rays transfused through sun-pierced windows; the blue mist strewing aisle and wreathing arch, the only garlands. Nor less because for once an assembly gathered of all the fraternities of music, had the unmixed element of pure enthusiasm thrilling through the “electric chain” from heart to heart. Below the organ stood Seraphael's desk, as yet unhaunted; the orchestra; the chorus, as a cloud-hung company, with star-like faces in the lofty front.

I knew not much about London orchestras, and was taking a particular stare, when Miss Lawrence whispered in a manner that only aroused, not disturbed me—“There is our old friend Santonio. Do look and see how little he is altered.” I caught his countenance instantly—as fine, as handsome, a little worn at its edges, but rather refined by that

process than otherwise. "I did not ask about him, because I did not know he was in London. He is then settled here, and is he very popular?"

"You need not ask the question ; he is too true to himself. No, Santonio will never be rich, though he is certainly not poor."

Then she pointed to me one head and another crowned with Fame, but I could only spare for them a glance ; Santonio interested me still. He was reminding me especially of himself as I remembered him, by laying his head as he had used to do upon the only thing he ever really loved—his violin—when, so quietly as to take us by surprise, Seraphael entered, I may almost say rose upon us, as some new-sprung star or sun.

Down the nave the welcome rolled, across the transept it overflowed the echoes ; for a few moments nothing else could be felt, but there was, as it were, a tender shadow upon the very reverberating jubilation—it was subdued as only the musical subdue their proud emotions—it was

subdued for the sake of one whose beauty, lifted over us, appeared descending, hovering from some late-left Heaven, ready to depart again, but not without a sign, for which we waited. Immediately, and while he yet stood with his eyes of power upon the whole front of faces, the solo-singers entered also and took their seats all calmly.

There were others besides Clara, but besides her I saw nothing, except that they were in colours while she wore black, as ever; but never had I really known her loveliness until it shone in contrast with that which was not so lovely. More I could not perceive, for now the entering bar of silence riveted, we held our breath for the coming of the Overture.

It opened like the first dawn of lightening, yet scarce yet lightened morning; its vast subject introduced with strings alone in that joyous key which so often served him, yet as in the extreme of vaulting distance; but soon the first trombone blazed out, the second and third responding with their stupendous tones as the

amplifications of fugue involved and spread themselves more and more ; until, like glory filling up and flooding the height of Heaven from the Heaven of Heavens itself, broke in the organ, and brimmed the brain with the calm of an utter and forceful expression, realized by Tone. In sympathy with each instrument, it was alike with none, even as the white and boundless ray of which all beams, all colour-tones, are born. The perfect form, the distinct conception of this unbrothered work, left our spirits as the sublime fulfilment confronted them : for once had Genius, upon the wings of aspiration that alone are pure, found all it rose to seek, and mastered without a struggle all that it desired to embrace ; for the pervading purpose of that creation was the passioned quietude with which it wrought its way. The vibrating harmonies pulse-like, clung to our pulses then, drew up, drew out each heart deep-beating and undistracted, to adore at the throne above from whence all beauty springs. And opening and spreading thus, too intricately, too transcendently for criticism, we do not essay, even feebly, to

portray that immortal work of a music-veiled immortal.

Inextricable holiness, precious as the old Hebrew psalm of all that hath life and breath, exhaled from every modulation, each dropped celestial fragrances, the freshness of everlasting Spring. Suggestive—our oratorio suggested nothing here, nothing that we find or feel—all that we seek and yearn to clasp, but rest in our restlessness to discover is beyond us! In nothing that form of music reminded of our forms of worship—in the day of Paradise it might have been dreamed of, an antepast of earth's last night, and of Eternity at hand—or it might be the dream of Heaven that haunts the loving one's last slumber.

I can no more describe the hush that hung above and seemed to spiritualize the listeners, until, like a very cloud of mingling souls, they seemed congregated to wait for the coming of a Messiah who had left them long, promising to return. Nor how, as chorus after chorus, built up, sustained and self-supported, gathered to the

stricken brain ; the cloud of spirits sank, as in slumber sweeter than any dreamful stir, upon the alternating strains and songs, all softness—all dread soothing, as the fire that burned upon the strings seemed suddenly quenched in tears. Faint supplications wafted now, now deep acclaims of joy, but all, all surcharged the spirit alike with the mysterious thrall and tenderness of that uncreate and unpronounceable Name, whose eternal Love is all we need to assure us of eternal Life.

It was with one of those alternate strains that Clara rose to sing, amidst silence yet unbroken, and the more impressive because of the milder symphony that stole from the violoncello, its meandering pathos asking to support and serve her voice. Herself penetrated so deeply with the wisdom of genius, she failed to remind us of herself; even her soft brow and violet eyes, violet in the dense glory of the Abbey afternoon light, were but as outward signs and vivid shadows of the spirit that touched her voice. Deeper, stiller than the violoncello notes, hers seemed as those

articulated, surcharged with a revelation beyond all sound.

Calm as deep, clear as still, they were yet not passionless; though they clung and moulded themselves strictly to the passion of the music lent not a pulse of their own; nor disturbed it the rapt serenity of her singing, to gaze upon her angel-face. No child could have seemed less sensitive to the surrounding throng, nor have confided more implicitly in the father of its heart than she leaned upon Seraphael's power.

I made this observation afterwards, when I had time to think—at present I could only feel, and feeling know, that the intellect is but the servant of the soul. When at length those two hours, concentrating such an eternity in their perfection of all sensation, had reached their climax; or rather when, brightening into the final chorus, unimprisoned harmonies burst down from stormy-hearted organ, from strings all shivering alike, from blasting, rending tubes—and thus bound fast the Alleluia—it was as if the multitude had sunk

upon their knees, so profound was the passion-cradling calm. The blue-golden lustre, dim and tremulous, still crowned the unwavering arches—tender and overwrought was laid that vast and fluctuating mind. So many tears are not often shed as fell in that silent while, dew-stilly they dropped and quickened, but still not all had wept.

Many wept then who had never wept before—many who had wept before could not weep now—among them I. Our party were as if lost to me; as I hid my face, my companion did not disturb me, she was too far herself in my own case. I do not know whether I heard, but I was aware of a stretching and breathing; the old bones stirring underneath the pavement would have shaken me less, but could not have been less to my liking; the rush however soft, the rustle however subdued, were agony—were torment; I could only feel, “Oh that I were in Heaven! that I might never return to earth!” but then it came upon me, to that end we must all be changed. This was sad, but of a sadness peculiarly soothing; for could we be con-

tent to remain for ever as we are here, even in our holiest, our strongest moments ?

During the last reverberations of that unimaginable Alleluiah, I had not looked up at all ; now I forced myself to do so, lest I should lose my sight of *him*, his seal upon all that glory. As Seraaphael had risen to depart, the applause, stifled and trembling, but not the less by heartfuls, rose for him.

He turned his face a moment, the heavenly half-smile was there ; then, at that very moment, the summer sun, that falling downwards in its piercing glare, glowed gorgeous against the flower-leaf windows, flung its burning bloom, its flushing gold, upon that countenance. We all saw it, we all felt it, the seraph-strength, the mortal beauty—and that it was pale as the cheek of the quick and living changed in death—that his mien was of no earthly triumph !

CHAPTER VII.

To that last phase of an unworldly morning succeeded the usual contrasts both of state and mood. Pushing out, all among the marbles in a graceless disorder, finding in the sacred gloom of the precinct the flashing carriages, the crested panels ; a rattle, a real noise, real things, real people : these were as one might expect, and yet I was very ungrateful ; for I desired especially to avoid my dear brother and dearest sister, who had come from the country that very day, though I yet had failed to recognise or seek for them. Davy could generally express what he *felt* about music, and I did not know how it might be.

I was thankful to be with Miss Lawrence,

who behaved exactly as I wished ; that is to say, when we were fairly seated, she began to talk to her father, not to me, and upon indifferent or adverse matters. Of Laura I had not even thought until now : she was upon my side, though not just next me ; she leaned back, and was so slight, that nothing could be seen of her, except her crushed-up dress. While, as an amusing point of idiosyncrasy, I may remark that Miss Lawrence's dress was as superb as ever ; she also carried her flowers, not one decayed. Laura had lost hers altogether.

Poor Starwood had closed his eyes, and was pretending to be asleep ; he had one of those headaches of his that render silence a necessity, although they are "only nervous," and do not signify in the least. I had no headache ; I never was better in my life, and I never felt so forcefully how much life is beyond *living*.

We drove home soon enough ; I was Miss Lawrence's guest, and I knew that with her generous goodness she had invited Millicent and Davy. We had scarcely entered the drawing-room, where

everything was utterly unreal to me, before Davy's little quick knock came.

Miss Lawrence then approached me, and putting her bonnet quite over my face, said, in a knowing wishper,

“ You just go along up stairs ; I know you can not bear it. I am not made quite of your stuff, and shall be happy to entertain your people. Your brother and sister are no such awful persons to me, I assure you.”

I obeyed—perhaps selfishly—but I should have been poor company indeed ; and went to my large bed-room. Large and luxuriously furnished, it even looked romantic. I liked it ; I passed to the window and was disturbed a moment afterwards by a servant who bore a tray of eatables with wine, sent by Miss Lawrence, of course, whose moments counted themselves out in deeds of kindness. I took the tray, delivered it to the charge of the first chair next the door, and returned to my own at the window-seat.

The blue sky, so intense and clear, so deep-piercing, was all I needed to gaze on ; and I was

far gone in reverie when I heard a knock at the door of my room. It was a strange short beat almost as weird as "Jeffrey," but at least it startled me to rise. I arose, and opened it. I beheld Laura. I was scarcely surprised; yet I should indeed have been surprised but for my immediate terror, almost awe, at her unformal aspect.

I never saw a living creature look so far like death. There was no gleam of life in her wan face so fallen, agonized; no mortal, spending sickness, could have so reduced her! She fixed upon me her wild eyes, clear as tearless; but at first she could not speak. She tried again and again, but at last she staggered, and I put her, I know not how exactly, into a chair at hand. She was light almost as a child of five years old, but so listless that I was afraid of hurting her; and immediately she sate down she fainted. It was a real unmitigated faint, and no mistake; I could see she had not herself expected it. I was accustomed to this kind of thing, however, for Lydia at home was fond of fainting away in church, or on the threshold of

the door ; also Fred's wife made a point of fainting at regular intervals. But I never saw any one faint as Laura ; she turned to marble in a moment ; there was a rigid fixing of her features that would have alarmed me had I loved her, and that rendered my very anxiety for her a grief. I could not lift her then, for light as she was she leaned upon me, and I could only stretch my arm to reach the decanter from its stand. The wine was, however, of no use at present ; I had to put the glass upon the floor after filling it with unmentionable exertion ; but after ten minutes or so, as I expected from a relaxation of her countenance, she awoke as out of a breathless sleep. She looked at me, up into my face—she was again the little Laura, whom I had known at Davy's class.

“ I only wanted to ask you to let me lie upon your bed, for I am going back to night, and have not a room here ; and I did not like to ask Miss Lawrence. I hope you do not mind it. I should not have done so, if I had not felt so very ill.”

The humility of her manner here, so unlike what I had seen in the little I had seen of her, made me ashamed, and it also touched me seriously. I said I was sorry, very sorry, that she should be ill, but that it was what any very delicate or feeling person might expect, after so much excitement. And as I spoke, I would have assisted her, but she assisted herself, and lay down upon the bed directly.

"If you please, sit in the window away from me, and go on with your thoughts. Do not trouble yourself about me, or I shall go away again."

"I will keep quiet, certainly, because you yourself should keep so."

And then I gave her the wine, and covered her with the quilt to the throat, for although it was so warm she had begun to shake and tremble as she lay. I held the wine to her lips, for she could not hold the glass; and while I did so, before she tasted, she said, with an emphasis I am very unlikely ever to forget.—

"I wish it could be poison!"

I saw there was something the matter then, and as being responsible at that instant, I mechanically uttered the reply,

“ Will you not tell me why you wish it? I *can* mix poison, but I should be very sorry to give it to any one, and above all to you.”

“ Why to *me*? You would be doing more good than by going to hear all that music.”

I gazed at her for one moment—a suspicion (which had it been a certainty would have failed to turn me from her)—thwarted my simple pity. I gazed, and it was enough; I felt there was nothing I needed fear to know—that child had never sinned against her soul. I therefore said, more carelessly than just then I felt,

“ Miss Lemark, because you are gifted—because you are good—because you are innocent. It is not everybody who is either of these, and very few indeed are all the three. I will not have you talk just now, unless, indeed, you can tell me that I can do anything for you. You know how slight my resources are, but you need not fear to trust me.”

"If you did let me talk, what should I say? But you have told a lie, or rather, I made you tell it. I am *not* gifted, at least my gifts are such as nobody really cares for. I am innocent? I am *not* innocent; and for the other word you used, I do not think I ought to speak it; it no more belongs to me than beauty, or than happiness."

"All that is beautiful belongs to all who love it, thank God! Miss Lemark, or I should be very poor indeed in that respect. But why are you so angry with yourself, because, having gone through too much happiness, you are no longer happy? It must be so for all of us, and I do not regret, though I have felt it."

"*You* regret it—you to regret anything!" said Laura, haughtily, her hauteur striking through her paleness reproachfully. "You—a man! I would sell my soul, if I have a soul, to be a man, to be able to live to myself, to be delivered from the torment of being and feeling what nobody cares for."

"If we live to ourselves, we men, if I may call

myself a man, we are not less tormented, and not less because men are expected to bear up, and may not give themselves relief in softer sorrow. My dear Miss Lemark, it appears to me, that if we allow ourselves to sink, either for grief or joy, it matters not which, we are very much to blame, and more to be pitied. There is ever a hope, even for the hopeless, as they think themselves, how much more for those who need not and must not despair! And those who are born with the most hopeful temper, find that they cannot exist without faith."

"That is the way the people always talk who have everything the world can give them—who have more than everything they wish for—who have all their love cared for—who may express it without being mocked, and worship without being trampled on. You are the most enviable person in the whole world, except one, and I do not envy her, but I do envy you."

"Very amiable, Miss Lemark!" and I felt my old wrath rising, yet smiled it down. "You see all this is a conjecture on your part; you cannot

know what I feel, nor is it for you to say, that because I am a man I can have exactly what I please. Very possibly, precisely because I am a man, I cannot. But anyhow I shall not betray myself, nor is it ever safe to betray ourselves, unless we cannot help it."

"I do not care about betraying myself: I am miserable, and I *will* have comfort—comfort is for the miserable!"

"Not the comfort a human heart can bring you, however soft it may chance to be."

"I should hate a soft heart's comfort, I would not take it; it is because you are not soft-hearted I want yours."

"I would willingly bestow it upon you if I knew how; but you know that Keble says, "Whom oil and balsams kill, what salve can cure?"

"I do not know Keble."

"Then you ought to cultivate his acquaintance, Miss Lemark, as a poet, at least, if not as a gentleman."

I wished at once to twist the subject aside, and to make her laugh: a laugh dispels more mental

trouble than any tears at times. But, contrary to expectation on my part, my recipe failed here; she broke into a tremendous weeping, without warning; nor did she hide her face, as those for the most part do who must shed their tears; she sobbed openly, aloud; and yet her sorrow did not inspire me with contempt, for it was as unsophisticated as any child's; it was evident she had not been accustomed to suffering, and knew not how to restrain its expression, neither that it ought to be restrained. I moved a few feet from her, and waited; I did right—in the rain the storm exhaled: she wiped away her tears, but they yet pearled the long pale lashes as she resumed.

“I am much obliged to you for telling me I ought not to say these things, but it would be better if you could prevent my feeling them.”

“No one can prevent that, Miss Lemark, and perhaps it does not signify what you feel, if you can prevent its interfering with your duty to others and to yourself.”

“You, to talk of duty! You, who possess

every delight that the earth contains, and with whom I would rather change places than with the angels."

"I have many delights; but if I had no duties to myself, the delights would fail. An artist I consider, Miss Lemark, has the especial duty imposed upon him or her, to let it be seen that art is the nearest thing in the universe to God, after nature, and his life must be tolerably pure for that."

"That is just it. But it is easy enough to do right when you have all that your heart wants and your mind asks for. I have nothing."

"Miss Lemark, you are an artist."

"You know very well how you despise such art as mine, even if I did my duty by that; but I do not, and that is what I want comfort for; you did not think I should tell you anything else!"

"I would have you tell me nothing that you are not obliged to say; it is dangerous, at least I should find it so."

"You have not suffered, or if you have you have

never offended. I have done what would make you spurn me ; but that would not matter to me, anything is better than to seem what I am not."

"What is the matter, then? I never spurned a living creature, God knows ; and for every feeling of antipathy to some persons, I have felt a proportionate wish for their good. There are different ranks of spirits, Miss Lemark, and it is not because we are in one that we do not sympathise quite as much as is necessary with the rest. Albeit you and I are of one creed, you know—both artists, and both I believe desirous to serve Art as we best may ; thus we meet on equal grounds, and whatever you say I shall hear as if it were my sister who spoke to me."

"If you meant that, it would be very kind, for I have no brother ; I have none of my blood, and I can expect no one else to love me. I do not care to be loved even ; but every one must grow to something. You know Clara? I see you do ; you always felt for her as you could not help. No one could feel for her as she deserves. I wish I could die for Clara, and now I cannot die even for my-

self. For I feel—oh I feel, that to die is not to die—that music made me feel it, but I have never felt it before—I have been a heathen. I cannot say I wish I had not heard it, for anything is better than to be so shut out as I was. You remember how when I was a little girl I loved to dance; I always liked it until I grew up, but I cannot tell you how at last, when I came out in Paris, and after the few first nights—which were most beautiful to me—I wearied. Night after night in the same steps, to the same music—music—is it music? you do not look as if you called it so. I did not know I danced; I dreamed, I am not sure now sometimes, that I was ever awake those nights. I was lazy and grew indolent, and when Clara came to Paris I went along with her. Would you believe it? I have done nothing ever since.” She paused a long minute; I did not reply. “You are not shocked?”

“No, I think not.”

“You don’t scorn me and point your face at me? Then you ought, for I lived upon her and by her, and made no effort, while she took no rest,

working hard and always. But with it all she kept her health, like the angels in Heaven, and I grew ill and weak. I could not dance then. I felt it to be impossible, though sometimes it came upon me that I could ; and then the remembrance of those nights, all alike, night after night—I could not. Pray tell me now whether I am not worthless. But I have no beauty ; I am lost.”

“ Miss Lemark, if you were really lost, and had no beauty, it appears to me that you would not complain about it ; people do not, I assure you, who are ugly or in despair. You are overdone, and you overrate your little girlish follies ; everything is touched by the colour of your thought, but is not really what it seems. Believe me—as I cannot but believe—that your inaction arose from morbid feeling, and not too strong health ; not from true want of energy or courage. You are young, a great deal too young to trust all you fancy, or even feel ; and you ought to be thankful there is nothing more for you to regret than that weighing down your spirit. You will do everything we expect and wish when you become

stronger—a strong woman, I hope—for remember you are only a girl. Nor will you find that you are less likely to succeed then because of this little voluntary of idlesse.”

“ You are only speaking so because it is troublesome to you to be addressed at all. You do not mean it ; you are all music.”

“ There is only one who is all music, Miss Lemark.”

She hid her face for many minutes ; at last she looked up, and said with more softness, a smile almost sweet—

“ Mr. Auchester, I feel I am detaining you ; let me beg you to sit down.”

I just got up on the side of the bed.

“ That will do beautifully. And now, Miss Lemark, if I am to be your doctor, you must go to sleep.”

“ Because I shall not talk ? But I will not go to sleep, and I will talk. What should you do if you were in my place, feeling as I do ?”

“ I do not know all.”

“ You may if you like.”

"Then I may guess ; at least I may imagine all I might feel if I were in your place—a delicate young lady who has been fainting for the love of music."

"You are sneering : I do not mind that. I have seen just such an expression upon a face I admire more than yours. Suppose you felt you had seen ——"

"What I could never forget, nor cease to love"—I answered, fast and eagerly ; I *could* not let her say it or anything just there—"I should earnestly learn his nature, should fill myself to the brim with his beauty, just as with his music. I should feel that, in keeping my heart pure, above all from envy, and my life most like his life, I should be approaching nearer than any earthly tie could lead me ; should become worthy of his celestial communion, of his immortal, his heavenly tendencies. Nor should I regret to suffer—to suffer for his sake."

I used these last words—themselves so well remembered !—without remembering who said them for me first, till I had fairly spoken ; then I, too

longed to weep : Maria's voice was trembling in my brain, a ghostly music. As Laura answered the ghostly music passed, even as a wind shaken and scattered upon the sea—it was earth again, as vague, scarcely less lonely !

“ A worldly man would mock. You do not a much wiser thing, but you do it for the best. I will try to hide it for ever ; for there is indeed no hope.”

Half imploring, this was hardly a question ; yet I answered,

“ I do believe none.”

“ You are cold—not cruel. I would rather know the truth. Yes ! I will hide it for ever ; I will not even speak of it to you.”

“ Even from yourself hide it, if it must be hidden at all. And yet I always think that a hidden sorrow is the best companion we can have.”

“ I am very selfish. I know that if Miss Lawrence finds out I am with you, you will not like it. You had better let me go down stairs.”

“ I will go myself if you prefer to be alone, but you must not move.”

"I must move—I will not be found here ; I had quite forgotten that. I will go this moment."

I did not dream of her actually departing ; but before I could remonstrate further, she had planted herself lightly upon the carpet, and looked as well as usual—it was nothing extraordinary to see her pale. She smoothed her long hair at my glass, and arranged her dress : she shook hands with me afterwards, also, and then she left the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

I WAS really alone now, but had a variety of worrying thoughts, hunting each other to death, but reproducing each other by thousands. I was irate with Laura, though I felt very sad ; but of all most vexed that such an incident should have befallen my experience that crown of days. The awful power of a single soul struggled in my apprehension with the vain weakness of a single heart. But more overpowering than either, was the sensation connecting the two. It was a remembrance that I, too, might be called to suffer.

At last Miss Lawrence sent to know whether I chose my dinner. Her own hour was six, and just at hand ; but I felt so extremely disinclined to eat

that I thought I would refuse, and take a walk, another way. Miss Lawrence was one of those persons—gladdening souls are they!—who mean exactly what they say, and expect you to say exactly what you mean: thus I had no difficulty in explaining that I preferred to take this walk; though it was not, after all, a walk *semplique*, for I was bound to the cottage, and desired to reach it as soon as possible.

I met Miss Lawrence on the stairs, and she charged me to take care of Laura; I could not refuse, of course, and we drove in one of those delightful cabs that so effectually debar from connected conversation. I was glad for once, though I need not have troubled myself to descant; for Laura, in a great green veil, opened not her lips twice, nor once looked towards me.

We dismissed the conveyance at the entrance of the hamlet, and walked up together, still silent. It was about half-past seven then, and vivid as at morning the atmosphere, if not the light. Unclouded sunshine swept the clustered leaves of the intense June foliage, heavy-tressed laburnum wore

it instead of blossoms ; but from the secluded shade of the wayside gardens pierced the universal scent of roses above all other fragrance except the limes which hung their golden bells out here and there, dropping their singular perfume all lights alike.

I saw Seraphael's house first, and returned to it after leaving Laura at that other white gate. All our windows were open—the breeze blew over a desert of flowers—all was “fairy-land forlorn.” I felt certain no one could be at home. I was right here. I could not enter. I was drawn to that other gate—I entered. Thoné opened the door looking quite as eastern in the western beams.

“Is Miss Benette at home?”

“I will see.” For Thoné could spell out a little English now. She went and saw.

“Yes Sir, to you ; and she wishes to see you.”

It was the first time Thoné had ever called me Sir, and I felt very grand. A strange, subtile fancy, sweeter than the sweetest hope, sprang daringly within me. But a crushing fear uprose, it swelled and darkened—my butterfly was broken upon that wheel—those rooms so bright and festal,

the air and sunshine falling upon clustered flowers, upon evening freshness as at morning—were not, could not be, for me! I advanced to the open piano, its glittering sheets outspread—its smiling keys.

Hardly had I felt myself alone before one other entered: alas! I was still alone! Clara herself approached me, less calm than I had ever seen her; her little hand was chilled as if by the rough kisses of an eastern wind, though the south air fanned our summer; there was agitation in her whole air, but more excitement. I had never seen her excited; I had not been aware how strangely I should feel to see her touched so deeply.

“Mr. Auchester, it must be heaven who sent you here to-night, for I wanted to see you more than anybody, and was expecting some one else. I never thought I should see you first, I wished it so very much.”

“Miss Benette, if it were in my power I would give you all you wish, for the sake only of hearing you wish but once. I am grateful to be able to fulfil your wishes in the very least degree. What

is it now ?"—for her lip quivered like an infant's, and one tear stood in each of her blue eyes. She wiped away those dew-drops that I would have caught upon my heart ; and answered, her voice of music all quiet now.

" I have had a strange letter from the gentleman you love so well. I do not feel equal to what he asks—that is, I am not deserving ; but still I must answer it : and after what you said to me last time you were so kind as to talk to me, I do not think it right to overlook it."

" I may not see the letter ? I do not desire it ; but suffer me to understand clearly what it is about exactly, if you do not think me too young, Miss Benette !"

" Sir, I always feel as if you were older, and I rely upon you. I will do as you please ; I wish to do so only. This letter is to ask me to marry him. Oh ! how differently I felt when I was asked to marry Mr. Davy !"

" Yes, I rather suppose so——. You are ready to reply ?"

" Not quite. I had not considered such a thing,

and should have thought first of marrying a king or an angel."

"He is above all kings, Miss Benette ; and if he loves you, no angel's happiness could be like your own. But is it so wholly unexpected ?"

"I never imagined it, Sir, for one single moment ; nor could any woman think he would prefer her. Of course, as he is above all others, he has only to choose where he pleases."

I could not look at her as she spoke ; I dared not trust myself—the most thrilling irony pointed her delicate lovesome tones. I know not that she knew it, but I did ; it cut me far deeper than to the heart, and through and through my spirit the wound made way. No tampering, however, with "oil and balsams" here !

"Wherever he pleases I should say. No one he could choose could fail (I should imagine) in pleasing him to please herself."

She retorted, more tenderly. "I think it awful to remember that I may not be worthy, that I may make him less happy than he now is, instead of more so."

"Only love him!"

"But such a great difference! He will not always walk upon the earth. I cannot be with him when he is up so high."

"I only say the same. He needs a companion for his earthly hours; then only is it he is alone. His hours of elevation require no sympathy to fill them, they are not solitude."

"I will do as you please, Sir; for it must be right. Do you not wish you were in my place?" She smiled softly upon me, just lifting her lovely eyes.

"Miss Benette, I know no one but yourself who could fill those hours I spoke of, nor any one but that beloved and glorious one who is worthy to fill your heart *all* hours. More I cannot say, for the whole affair has taken me by surprise."

I had indeed been stricken by shock upon shock that day; but the last remained to me, when the wailings of misfortune, the echoes of my bosom-music, alike had left my brain. I could not speak, and we both sate silent, side by side, until the sun in setting streamed into the room. Then, as I rose

to lower the blind, and was absent from her at the window, I heard a knock.—I had, or ought to have expected it ; yet it turned me from head to foot—it thrilled me through and through. I well knew the hand that had raised the echoes like a salute of fairy cannon. I well knew the step that danced into the hall. I was gone through the open window, not even looking back. I ran to the bottom of the garden ; I made for the Queen's highway ; I walked straight back to London.

There was a great party in Miss Lawrence's, I knew it from the corner of the square ; and I had to leave the lustrous darkness, the sleepy stars and great suffusing moonshine, the very streets filled full and overflowing with waftures of fragrances from the country, dim yet so delicious ; for that terrible drawing-room. I took advantage of the excitement, however, that distressed me as it never burned before, to plunge instantly into a duet for violin and piano—Miss Lawrence calling me to her by the white spell of her waving hand the very moment I entered at the drawing-room door. My duet, her noble playing, made me myself, *as ever*

music saves her own, and I conducted myself rather less like a nightmare than I felt. The party consisted of first-rate amateurs, the flower of the morning festival, both from orchestra and audience—all enchanted—all wordy—except my precious Davy, who was very pale, and Starwood, whose eyes almost went into his head with pain.

We all did our best, though—Starwood played most beautifully, and in a style which made me glory over him—Davy sang, though his voice was rather nervous—a great many people came up to me, but they got nothing out of me—I could not descant upon my religion. When at length they descended to supper—a miscellaneous meal which Miss Lawrence always provided in great state—I thought I might be permitted to retire. Will it be believed, that, half an hour afterwards, hearing my sister and Davy come up leisurely to bed, and peeping out to see them, I heard Millicent distinctly say, “I hope baby is asleep!” I was to return with them on the morrow, but directly after breakfast Miss Lawrence made me one of her signs, and led me thereby, without controlling me hand

or foot, out of the breakfast room. We were soon alone together in the studio.

"I thought you would like to be here this morning, for Seraphael has promised to come and see it. I think myself that he will be rather surprised."

I could not help smiling at her tone, it was so unaffectedly satisfied.

"I should think he will, Miss Lawrence!"

"I don't mean as to the merits of the picture, but because he does not know it is—what shall I say?—historical—biographical—allegorical."

"You mean hieroglyphic?"

"Exactly."

"But he will not be likely to say anything about that part of it, will he? Is he not too modest or too proud?"

"Why, one never can know what he will say or do. I should not wonder the least in the world if he took the brushes up and put the eyes in, open."

I laughed—"Does he paint, though?"

"Between ourselves, Mr. Auchester, there is no-

thing he cannot do—no accomplishment in which he does not excel. He can paint, can design, can model, can harmonize all languages into a language of his own—all mysteries—all knowledge—all wisdom, we know too well—too well! indeed—dwell with him, are of him. I am always afraid, when I consider these things. What a blessing to us and to all men if he would only marry! We should keep him a little longer, then.”

“Do you think so? I am fearful it would make no real difference. There is a point where all sympathy ceases.”

Miss Lawrence shook her head, a lull came over the animation of her manner—she hastened to arrange her scenery, now unique. She had placed before the picture a velvet screen, deep emerald and grass-like in its shade—this veil stood out alone, for she had cleared away all sign of picture, sketch, or other frame besides. Nothing was in the room but the picture on its lofty easel, and the loftier velvet shade. I appreciated to the full the artist tact of the veil itself, and said so.

“I think,” was her reply, “it will be more

likely to please him if I keep him waiting a little bit, and his curiosity is touched a moment."

And then we went downstairs. Davy, who always had occupation on hand, and would not have been destitute of duty on the shore of a desert island, was absent in the City; Millicent, who had taken her work to a window, was stitching the most delicate wristband in Europe, inside the heavy satin curtain, as comfortably as in her tiny home. Miss Lawrence went and stood by her, entertained her enchantingly, eternally reminding her of her bliss by Mrs. Davy's till I could but laugh—but still my honoured hostess was very impetuously excited, for her eyes sparkled as most eyes only light by candleshine, or the setting sun. She twisted the tassel of the blind, too, till I thought the silk cord would have snapped, but Millicent only looked up gratefully at her, without the slightest sign of astonishment or mystification.

"Charles!" exclaimed my sister at length, when Miss Lawrence, fairly exhausted with talking, was gathering up her gown into folds and extempore

plaits—"Charles! you will be ready at two o'clock, and we shall get home to tea."

I could not be angry with her for thinking of her baby—her little house—her heaven of home—but there was a going back to winter for me in the idea of going away. The music seemed dead, not slumbering, that I had heard the day before. But is this strange? For there is a slumber we call death. About half-past ten a footman fetched Miss Lawrence—she touched my arm, apologizing to Millicent, though not explaining—and we left the room together. She sent me onwards to the studio, and went down stairs alone. I soon heard them coming up, indeed, I expected them directly, for Seraphael never waited for anything, and never lost a moment. They were talking, and when he entered he did not at first perceive me. His face was exquisite. A charm softened the Hebrew keenness that was not awful, like the passion music stirring the hectic, or spreading its white light. He was flushed, but more as a child that has been playing until it is weary—his eyes, dilated, were of

softer kindness than the brain gives birth to—his happy yet wayward smile, as if he rejoiced because self-willing to rejoice: his clear gaze—his eager footstep—reminded me of other days, when he trembled on the verge of manhood: it was, indeed, as a man, that he shone before me that morning, and had never shone before. They stood now before the screen, and I was astonished at the utter self-possession of the paintress, she only watched his face, and seemed to await his wishes.

“That screen is very beautiful velvet, and very beautifully made. Am I never to look at anything else? Is nothing hidden behind it? I have been very good, Miss Lawrence, and I waited very patiently. I do not think I can wait any longer. May I pull it away?”

“Sir, most certainly. It is for you to do so at your pleasure. I am not afraid either, though you will think me not over-modest.”

Seraphael touched the screen—it was massive, and resisted his little hand: he became impatient—Miss Lawrence only laughed, but I rushed out

of my corner to help him. Before he looked at the picture, he gave me that little hand and a smile of his very own.

“Look, dearest Sir!” I cried, “pray look now!” and indeed, he looked, and indeed, I shall not forget it. It was so strange to turn from the living lineaments—the eye of the sun and starlight—the brilliant paleness—the changeful glow—the look of intense and concentrated vitality upon temple and lip and skin, to the still immortal visage—the aspect of glory beyond the grave—the lustre unearthly, but not of death, that struck from those breathless lips—those snow-sealed eyes. And, above all, to see that the light seemed not to descend from the crown upon the forehead, but to aspire from the forehead to the crown—so the rays were mixed and fused into the idea of that eternity in which there shall be a new earth besides another heaven!—That transcending picture! how would it affect him? I little knew. For as he stood, and gazed, he grew more like it—the smile faded—the deep melancholy I had seldom seen.

and never without a shudder, swept back—as the sun goes into a cloud, his face assumed a darklier paleness—he appeared to suffer, but did not speak. In some minutes still, he started, turned to Miss Lawrence, and sighing gently, as gently said, “I wish I were more like it! I wish I were as that is! but we may not dream dreams, though we may paint pictures. I should like to deserve your idea, but I do not at present. Happy for us all who build upon the future! as you have done in that painting. I mean, entirely, as to the perfection of the work.”

“Have I your permission to keep it, Sir?”

“What else, Madam, would you do with it?”

“Oh, if you had not approved I should have slashed it into pieces with a carving knife, or my father’s razor. I shall keep it, with your permission; it will be very valuable and precious, and I have to thank you for the inestimable privilege of possessing it.”

This cool treatment of Miss Lawrence’s delighted me—it was the only one to restore our Chevalier.

He, indeed, returned unto his rest, for he left the house that moment. Nor could I have desired him to remain—there was only one presence in which I cared to imagine him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE day had come and gone when Clara, for the first time, dressed in white. The sun-grain of August had kissed the corn, the golden-drooping sheaves waved through the land fresh cut, and the latest roses mixed pale amidst the lilies beneath the bounteous harvest-moon, when she left us—but not alone. It was like dying twice over to part with them that once, and therefore it will not be believed how soon I could recover the farewell, and feed upon Clara's letters which never failed me once a month. For a year they more sustained me than anything else could have done ; for they told of a life secluded as any who loved *him* could desire for him, and not more free from pain than

care. Of herself she never spoke, except to breathe sweet wishes for her friends ; but her whole soul seemed bent upon his existence, and her descriptions were almost a diary. I could not be astonished at her influence, for it had governed my best days ; but that she should be able to secure such a boon to us as a year of unmitigated repose for him, was precisely what I had not anticipated, nor dared to expect. Meantime, and during that year, our work was harder than ever. Davy and I were quite unconscious of progressing, yet were perfectly happy, and as ever determined ; indeed, nothing like a slight contumacy on the part of the pupils kept Davy up to the mark. From Starwood, who had returned to Germany, I also received accounts, but he was no letter-writer, except when there was anything very particular to say. He was still a student, and still under Seraphael's roof. Strange and Arabian dreams were those I had of that house, in the heart of a country so far away ; for the Chevalier had moved nearer the Rhine, and nothing in his idiosyncrasy so betokened the Oriental tincture of his blood as his

restless fondness for making many homes—while he was actually at home in none.

We lived very happily, as I said. It was perhaps not extraordinary that to my violin I grew more infinitely attached—was one with it, and could scarcely divide myself from it. I lived at home still, that is I slept at home, and usually ate there ; but Davy's house was also home—it had grown dearer to me than ever, and was now fairer. The summer after our friends had left us was brilliant as the last, and now the shell was almost hidden by the clinging of all loveliest creepers ; the dahlias in the garden had given place to standard rose-trees, and though Carlotta could not reach them, she had learned to say, “rose !” and to put up her pretty hand for me to pluck her one. With a flower she would sit and play an entire morning, and we never had any trouble with her. Millicent worked and studied as conveniently as though she had never been born ; for it was Davy's supreme wish to educate his daughter at home, and her mamma had very elaborate ideas of self-culture in anticipation. During that Autumn we found

ourselves making some slight way Davy took it into his head to give utterance, for the first time, to a public concert ; and I will not say I was myself averse. We had a great deal of conversation and a great many sessions on the subject, not exactly able to settle whether we would undertake a selection or some entire work. Our people were rather revived out of utter darkness concerning music, but its light was little diffused, and seemed condensed in our class-room as a focus. The band and chorus, of course, made great demonstrations in favour of the Messiah ; and my mother who had taken an extraordinary interest in the affair, said innocently enough—

“Then why, my dears, not represent the Messiah ? It will be at Christmas time, and very suitable.”

This was not the point, for Davy had reminded me of the fact, that the Festival for the approaching year at the centre of the town would open with that work ; unless indeed the committee departed from their precedent on all former occasions. My idea would have been a performance all Bach,

Beethoven, and Seraphael, with Handel's ode for a commencement, on the 22nd of November—but Davy shook his head at me—

“That would be for Germany, not for England ;” and I obliged myself to believe him. At length we accepted the Messiah, to the great delight of the chorus and the band.

It was a pressing time all through that autumn, I do not suppose I ever thought of anything but fiddles, fiddles, fiddles, from morning till night. They edged my dreams with music, and sometimes with that which was very much the reverse of music ; for we had our difficulties. Prejudice is best destroyed by passion, which as yet we had not kindled. Davy met with little support, and no sympathy, except from his own—this mattered little either so long as his own were concerned, but now in prospect of our illustration it was necessary to secure certain instrumental assistance.

I undertook to do this—besides my own strings we had brass and wind, but not sufficient. I shall not forget the difficulty of thawing the players I visited—I will not call them artists—into anything

like genial participation. Their engagement was sufficiently formal, nor did they like me ; I suppose they owed a grudge against my youth, for youth is unpardonable and inadmissible except in the case of genius. Neither did they thaw, any more than the weather, on Christmas Eve ; it was on Christmas Eve we were to perform. It was an eve of ice, not snow, the blue sky silvery, the earth bound fast in sleep. We had hired a ball-room at the chief hotel, an elegant and rather rare room ; it was warmed by three wide fire-places, and the crimson curtains closed, with the chairs instead of benches, gave a social and unusual charm to the whole proceeding.

If our audience entered aghast, looking frozen, rolled in furs and contempts, they could not help smiling upon the fires, the roseate glow, though they also could not help being disconcerted to find themselves treated all alike, for Davy would have no reserved seats, nor any exclusiveness on this occasion. As he intended, besides, to restore the work exactly as it was first written, we expected a little cold, and a few black looks, no modern

listeners can receive an oratorio as orthodox, without an organ of Titan-build in the very middle that takes care to sound.

The overture, beautifully played, was taken down with chill politeness; but my own party were so pleased with themselves, and made such extatic motions with their features, that it was quite enough for me. The first chorus so lightly, delicately, shown up, not extinguished by the orchestra; and indeed chorus after chorus found no more favour yet: still no one could help feeling the perfect training here—I knew as well as Davy, envy or pride alone kept back the free confession. The exquisite shading in the chorus, the public's darling—"Unto us a child is born," and the grandeur of the final effect, subdued them a little; they cheered, and Davy gave me a glance over his shoulder, which I understood to say "One must come in for certain disadvantages if one is well received;" for Davy abhorred a noise as much as I did. When we waited between the parts some one fetched Davy away in an immense hurry: he did not return immediately, and I grew alarmed..

I peeped into the concert-room, there sat Millicent most composedly, and Lydia with her lord, and Clo in her dove-coloured silk and spectacles, and my mother in her black satin and white kid gloves, looking crowned with happiness: it was evident that nothing was the matter at home. But having a few minutes, I went to speak to them, and then my mother, in her surmises about Davy, whom she loved as her own son—and Clo, whose principles were flattered, not shocked, in her approval—took up so much time that I was at last obliged to fly to my little band who were assembled again, and tuning by fits. Still Davy was not there. But presently, and just at the very moment when it was necessary to begin, he appeared, so looking that I was sure either something very dread or very joyous had befallen him. His eye gazed brightly out to the whole room as he faced, instead of turning from it. He could not help smiling, and his voice quivered as he spoke. He said in those fond accents—

“I have the pleasure to announce that the Chevalier Seraphael, having just arrived from

Germany on a visit to myself, has consented to conduct the Second Part himself."

I had been sure the Chevalier was in him before he spoke, but I little thought how it would come about. Immediately he finished speaking, the curtain above us divided, and that heavenly-inspired one stood before us.

There was that in his apparition which stirred the slowest and burned upon the coldest pulses. All rose and shouted with an enthusiasm, when elicited from English hearts perhaps more real and touching than any other—a quickening change like sudden summer swept the room—the music became infinitely at home there, we all felt as if watching over the dead—we had seen the dead alive again—the "old familiar strains" untired us, and none either wearied among the listeners. I could not, in the trances of my own playing, forbear to worship the gentle knowledge that had led the Hierarch to that humble shrine, to consecrate and ennoble it for ever. But the event told even sooner than I expected, for lo! at the end, when the Chevalier turned his kingly head, and bowed

to the reiterated applaudings, and had passed out—those plaudits continued, and would not cease till Davy was recalled himself, the pent-up reverence—restored to its proper channel, eddied in streams around him.

What an evening we spent, or rather what a night we made that night! in that little parlour of Davy's, the little green-house thrown open and lighted by Millicent, with Carlotta's Christmas candles—the supper where there was hardly room for us all at the table, and hardly room upon the table for all the good things my mother sent for from her pantry and larder, and store-closet—the decoration of the house with green wreaths and holly-bunches, the swept and garnished air of the entire tiny premises standing us in such good stead to welcome the Christmas visitant with Christmas festivity; the punch Davy mixed in Carlotta's christening-bowl, my mother's present, she perfectly radiant and staring with satisfaction in the arm-chair, where Seraphael himself had placed her as we closed around the fire—the Christmas music never wanting, for in the midst of our joyous

talk, a sudden celestial serenade, a deep-voiced carol, burst from beyond the garden, and looking out there we beheld through rimed and frost-glazed windows, a clustered throng, whose voices were not uncultured—the warmest-hearted members of Davy's own. They were still singing when Carlotta awoke and cried, had to be brought down stairs, and was hushed listening in Seraphael's arms.

So after all we did not go to bed that night, for it was quite two o'clock when I escorted my mother and sisters home, having left the little room I usually occupied when I slept at my brother's house, for Seraphael, whom no one would suffer to sleep at the hotel. I might remind myself of the next day too, and I surely may: of our all going to church together after a night of snow, over the sheeted white beneath a cloudless heaven—of our all sitting together in that large pew of ours, and the excitement prevailing among the congregation afterwards as they assured themselves of our guest—of the chimes swelling high from the tower as we returned, and my walk alone

with Seraphael to show him where Clara's house had stood. When we were indeed alone together, I asked more especially after her, and listened to his tender voice when it told of her that she was not then strong enough to cross the sea ; but that, though he could only leave her for a week, it was her latest request that he would come to see us all himself, nor return without having done so. And then he spoke of the affairs that had brought him over—an entreaty from the committee of our own Town Festival that he would direct that of the coming year and compose exclusively for it.

It made me very indignant at first that they should have kept Davy so entirely in the dark as to their intentions, because he had been forewarned on all previous occasions before his influence was so strong in his own circle. But when I expressed a little my indignation, Seraphael only laughed, and said,—

“ It was what every one must expect who was such a Purist, unless he would also condescend to amuse the people at times and seasons, or unless he were not *poor*.”

My obligation to accede here made me yet more indignant, until I remembered how Seraphael had introduced himself, and so taken Davy by the hand that it would not be likely for him ever again to be thrust back into obscurity afterwards, were it only because Seraphael himself was *rich*.

"And will you come to us, Sir?" I asked, scarcely able to frame a wish upon the subject.

"If I live, Carlomein. And I do hope to live, till then at least. I have also been rather idle lately, and must work. Indeed I have brought nothing with me, except a psalm or two for your brother. We may write music to psalms, I suppose, Carlomein?"

"You may, Sir; and indeed anybody may; for whatever is worthless will be forgotten, and whatever is worthy will live for ever."

"It is not that anything we offer can be worthy of the feet at which we lay it—it is not that anything is sweet or sufficient for our love's expression! but every little word of love and smile of love is precious to us, and must be so to Love itself, I think. Only in music now does God reveal

himself as in the days of old, and I do believe, Carlomein, that He dwelling not in temples made with hands, yet dwelleth there. I suppose it may be, that as we make the music that issues from the orchestra, or from the organ where all musics mingle; so He makes the love that Religion burns to utter; but that Music, for the musical, alone makes manifest. All worship is sacred, but that is unutterably holy. How holy should the heart of the musician be!"

"Dearest Sir, forgive me! if you had not spoken so I could not have presumed to ask you. But do you, therefore, object to write for the stage, in its present promiscuous position among the arts?"

"Carlomein, the drama is my greatest delight. The dramatic genius I would ever accept a guide and standard; but, from youth upwards, I have ever abstained from writing for the stage. It does not suit me, it is in some respects beyond me; that is, as it ought to exist. But my days are numbered; I have lately known it; and to give forth opera after opera would reduce my short span

to a mere holiday task. I am too happy, Carlomein, and to you I will say it—too blest—in that I feel I can best express what others left to me because expression failed them.”

“Oh! dearest Sir! it is so, and not alone in music, but in everything you touch or tell us! Yet you are ours for years and years. I feel it: there is so much to be done, and only you can do it; so much to learn, yet of what you can only teach us. You cannot, you will not, and are not going to leave us! I know it; I could not be so if I did not know and feel it. You are looking better than when even first I saw you—all those years ago.”

“I am well, Carlomein—I have never been ill. I do not know sickness, though I have known sorrow—thank God for that inexpressible mystery in which His light is hidden. But, Carlomein, you speak as if it were of all things the saddest thing to die! I know not that sensation; I believe it to be mere sensation. Neither is this earth a wilderness—no weariness! There is not an air of spring that does not make me long for death; the

burdening gladness is too much for life, and summer and winter call me. Eternity without years is ever present with me, and the poor music they love so well, they love because it comes to me from beyond the grave."

I could not hear him speak so ; it killed me to all but a ravishment of fear. I could not help saying, though I fear it was out of place—

"There is one you must not leave, she cannot live without you."

"Carlomein, anyone can live who is to live, and whoever is decreed must die. There is no death for me. I do not call it so ; nor do I believe that death could touch me. I mean I should not know it, for I could not bear it ; and I fear it not, for nothing we cannot bear is given us to endure."

"Sir, if I did not revere too much every word you utter, I should say that a morbid presentiment clouds your enthusiasm, and that you know not what you say."

"Do I look morbid, Carlomein ? That is an ugly word, and you deserve it as much as I do pale-face !"

He laughed out joyously. I looked at him again. How his eyes radiated their splendours, as an eastern starlight in a northern sky! How the blossom-blushes rose upon his cheek!—health, joy, vitality, all the flowers of manhood, the fairest laurels of an unsullied fame, shone visionary about him. He seemed no earthling “born to die.” I could not but smile, still it was at his beauty, not his mirth.

“Sir, you don’t look much like a martyr now.”

“Carlomein, I should rather be a martyr than a saint. The saints are robed in glory, but the glory streams from heaven upon the martyr’s face. Oh, he could feel no pain, with that light there! I know he felt none. The saints wear lilies, or they dream so, and dream they not the martyrs wear the roses? have not the thorns pierced through them? they are thornless roses there, for passion is made perfect.”

“Sir, but I do think that the musician, if devout, is meet for a starry crown.”

“And I could only think, when I saw that picture, that the crown was not mine own; but I

dreamed within myself, that it should not be in vain I desire to deserve the crown which I should wear, but not that star-crown. Poetry may be forgiven for hiding sorrow in bliss, but it is only music that hides bliss with sorrow. And see, Carlomein, for we are in a tale of dreams just now, and both alone ; there have been martyrs for all faiths—for love, for poetry, for patriotism, for religion—oh ! for what cause where passion strikes and stirs has there not been martyrs ? but I think music has not many, and those were discrowned of that glory by the other crown of Fame. Shall I die young, and not be believed to have died for music ? for that end must the music be rapt and purified—stolen from life itself ; its pleasures must be strong to pain, its exercises sharper than agony. I know of none other choice for myself than to press forwards to fulfil the call I have heard since music spoke to me, and was as the voice of God. There is so much to undo in very doing, while those who were not called but have only chosen, music, defile her mysteries—that the few who are called must surely witness for her. We will not speak

again so, Carlomein. I have made your young face careful, and I would rather see scorn work upon it than such woe. I am now going to a shop; are there any shops here, Carlomein?"

"Plenty, Sir, but they are closed; still I am certain you can get anything you want, no matter what."

"I have something to make to-night which is most important, and I must have nuts, apples, and sugar-plums."

We went to a large confectioner's, whose windows were but semi-shuttered. Here the Chevalier quite lost himself in the treasures of those glass magazines; I should scarcely have known him as he had been. He chose very selectly, nathless, securing only the most delicate and rare of the wonders spread about him, and which excited his naiveté to the utmost. His choice comprised all crisp white comfits and red-rose ones, almond-eggs, the most ravishing French bonbons, all sorts of chocolate, myriad sugar millions like rain from fairy rainbows, twisted green angelica, golden strips of crystalized orange-peel, not to speak of rout-cakes like fish, and frogs, and mice, and birds'-nests. Nor did these suffice: off

we walked to the toy-shop. Our town was of world-renown for its toys. Here it was not so easy to effect an entrance ; but it *was* effected the moment the Chevalier showed his face ; to this hour I believe they took him in there for some extraordinary little boy—he certainly behaved like nothing else. He bought now beads all colours, and spangles and shining leaf, and of all things the most exquisite doll, small-featured, waxen, dressed already in long white robes, and lying in a cradle about a foot long, perfectly finished. And next, besides this baby's baby, he snatched at a box of letters, then at a gilt watch, and finally at a magic lantern. We so loaded ourselves with all these baubles that we could scarcely get along ; for, with his wonted impetuosity on the least occasions, he would not suffer anything to be sent lest it should not arrive in time. And then, though I reminded him of the dinner-hour at hand, there was to be no rest yet, but I must take him to some garden, or nursery of winter-plants. Fortunately, a great friend of Davy's in that line lived very near him—for Davy was a great flower-fancier—this

was convenient; for had it been two miles off, Seraphael would have run there, being in his uttermost wayward mood. We chose a gem of a fir-tree, and though both the florist and I remonstrated with our whole hearts, would carry it himself, happily not very far. I was reminded of dear old Aronach's story about his child-days, as I saw him clasp it in his delicate arms so nerved with power, and caught his brilliant face through the spires of the foliage. Thus we approached Davy's house, and I reminded the Chevalier that we were expected to dine at my mother's, not there. In fact, poor Millicent, in her bonnet, looked out anxiously from the door; the Chevalier called to her as she ran to open the gate—"See, Mrs. Davy, see! Here's 'Birnam Wood come to Dunsinane'—make way!"

"You are very naughty," said Davy, stepping forth; "our beloved mamma will be coming after us."

"It is very rude, I know, but I am going to dine with your daughter."

"My daughter is coming, too. Did you think we should leave her behind?"

Millicent was about, in fact, to mount the stairs for the baby, but Seraphael rushed past her.

“ Pardon ! but I don’t wish to be seen at present ;” and we both bore our burdens into the parlour, and laid them on the table.

“ Now, Carlomein, the moment dinner is over we two shall come back and lock ourselves in here.”

“ I should like it of all things, Sir, selfish wretch that I am ! but I don’t think they will.”

“ Oh, yes, I’ll make them !”

When at last we descended ready ; Carlotta in her white beaver bonnet, my own present, looked as soft as any snowdrop—too soft almost to be kissed. She held out her arms to Seraphael so very pertinaciously, that he was obliged to carry her, nor would he give her up until we reached my mother’s door. It was quite the same at dinner also, she would sit next him, would stick her tiny fork into his face with a morsel of turkey at the end of it, would poke crumbs into his mouth with her finger, would put up her lips to kiss him, would say, every moment, “ I like you much—

much!" with all Davy's earnestness, though with just so much of her mother's modesty as made her turn pink and shy, and put herself completely over her chair into Seraphael's lap, when we laughed at her. He was in ecstasies, and every now and then a shade so tender stole upon his air, that I knew he could only be adverting to the tenderest of all human probabilities—the dream of his next year's offspring.

After dinner, Miss was to retire. She was carried up stairs by Margareth, of whom I can only say she loved Carlotta better than she had loved Carl. Seraphael then arose, and gracefully, gleefully, despite the solicitations on all hands exhibited, declared he must also go, that he had to meet the Lord Chancellor, and could not keep him waiting. There was no more prayer wasted after this announcement, everybody laughed too much; taking a handful of nuts from a dish, and throwing a glance of inexpressible elfishness at my mother, he said, "Carl and the Lord Chancellor and I are going to crack them in a corner. Come, Carlo-mein! we must not keep so grand a person wait-

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ing." I know not what blank he left behind him, but I know what a world he carried with him. We had such an afternoon ! but we had to be really very busy ; I never worked so hard in a small way. When all was finished, the gilt fruit hung, the necklaces festooned, the glitter ordered with that miraculous rapidity in which he surpassed all others, and that fairy craft of his by which he was enabled to recreate all Arabian, mystical — he placed the cradle in the shade.

" You see, Carlomein, I could not have a Christ-child up there at the top, because your brother is rather particular, and might not choose to approve. It will never occur to him about the manger, if we don't tell him ; but you perceive all the same that it is here, being made of straw and very orthodox."

" It appears to me, Sir, that you have learned English customs to some purpose, as well as German."

He replied by dancing round the tree, and twisting in the tapers red and green.

" Now you go, Carlomein, and fetch them all, and

when I hear your voices, I will light the candles. Begone, Carlomeinus ! and he snapped his fingers.

They came immediately, all rather mystified, but very curious. I carried Carlotta, who talked the whole way home about the stars. But after clustering a few moments in the dark passage, and her little whispered "ohs !" and wondering sighs, when the door was opened, and the arch-musician for all ages seated at the piano played a measure only meet for child or fairy ears, her ecstasy became quite painful. She shuddered and shivered, and at last screamed outright—and then, even then, only Seraphael had power to soothe her—leading her to the fairy earth-lights as he led us to the lights of Heaven.

Glorious hours that dye deep our memories in beauty, music that passes into echo and is silent—alike are conserved for ever. Often and often in the months that passed when he had left us, after a visit so exquisite that it might have been diffused millenniums and yet have kept its fragrance, did my thoughts take such a form as this enunciation bears ; I was so unutterably grateful

for what had happened, that it helped me to bear what was yet before me. The growing, glowing fame, heralded from land to land in praise of that young genius and purest youth, had certainly reached its culmination ; neither envy withered nor scandal darkened the spell of his perfect name. All grades of artists—all ranks of critics—the old and calm—the impertinent but impetuous young—bowed as in heart before him. It was so in every city, I believe—but in ours it was peculiar as well as universal. An odour of heavenly altars had swept our temple—we were fitter to receive him than we had been. In no instance was this shown more clearly than on the fortunate occasion when Davy was treated with, and requested very humbly to add his vocal regiment to the Festival chorus. One day, just afterwards, in early April, he came running to me with a letter, anxious for me to open it, as he was in a fit of fright about the parts which ought to have arrived, and had not. It was only a line or two, addressed to me by Seraaphael's hand, to tell us that Clara had borne him twin sons.

Davy's astonishment amused me, it appeared that he had formed no idea of their having been likely to come at all until this moment. I was glad indeed to be alone, to think of that fairest friend of mine now so singularly blest. I thought of her in bed with her babies—I thought of the babies being his, and she no less his own, until I was not fit company for any one—and it was long before I became so. I could hardly believe it, and more especially because they were all four so far away; for I am not of the opinion of those fortunate transcendentalists who aver we can better realize that which is away from us than that which is at hand. Time and space must remain to us our eternity and our freedom, till freedom and eternity shall be our own.

CHAPTER X.

WE were extremely busy for a little while, in preparing a box of presents, and when it was despatched, we began seriously to anticipate our awful, glorious festival: we began to have leisure to contemplate it. It was a delightful dream amidst that dream to reflect that we should see them all then, for Seraphael sent us word in his grateful reply to our enclosure, that both his children and their mother would accompany him. Meantime I was also very anxious to spread the news abroad, and most extraordinary appointments were made by all kinds of people to secure places. I began to think, and had I been in Germany should of course have settled to my own satis-

faction, that the performances must be in the open air after all—such crowds demanded admittance so early as early in June. It was for the last week in July that our triple day was fixed, and in the second week of June the long-expected treasure, the exclusive compositions, arrived from Lilienstadt. Davy was one of the committee called immediately, and I awaited in unuttered longing his return to hear our glorious doom.

He came back almost wild. I was quite alarmed, and told him so.

“Charles,” he said, “there is almost reason. So am I myself, in fact ; just listen to the contents of the parcel received : an oratorio for the first morning—such a subject, ‘Heaven and Earth,’—a cantata for a double choir—an organ symphony with interludes for voices only—a sonata for the violin—a group of songs and fancies. The last are for the evenings, but otherwise the evenings are to be filled up with Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and Handel—the programmes already made out. How is it possible, Charles, that such progress can have been condensed into a few mere months ? Think

of the excitement, the unmitigated stress of such an industry ! Three completed works in less than a quarter of a year, not to speak of the lesser wonders !”

It seemed to affect Davy’s brain ; as for me, I felt sure the works had stirred, as the spirit moving upon the face of the waters before the intermomentary light—long ages, as we reckon in this world’s computation, before they framed themselves into form. Nor was this conviction lessened when I first became acquainted with the new-born glories of an imagination on fire of Heaven.

Seraphael came to England, and of course northwards, to superintend the earliest rehearsals ; it was his own wish to do so, and every one felt it necessary to be introduced by him alone to what came alone of him. Those were strange times—I do not seem to have lived them—though in fact I was bodily present in that hall, consecrated by the passion of a child. But they were wild hours ; all tempest-tost was my spirit amidst the rush of a manifold enthusiasm.

Seraphael was so anxious to be at his home again, that the rehearsals were conducted daily ; he was to return again, having departed, for their ultimate fulfilment. It appeared very remarkable that he should not have taken the whole affair at once, have brought his family over then, and there remained ; but upon the subject he was unapproachable, only saying with relation to his arduous life just then and then to be, that he could not be too much occupied to please himself.

He did not stay in our house this time, we could not press him to do so, for he was evidently in that state to which the claims of friendship may become a burden instead of a beguiling joy. He was alone greatly at his hotel, though I can for myself say that in his intercourse with me his gentlenesses towards me were so sweet that I dare not remind myself of them. Still, in all he said and did there was something seeming to be that was not ; an indescribable want of interest in the charms of existence which he had ever drawn into his bosom—a constant endeavour to rouse from a manifest abstraction. Notwithstanding he still

wore the air of the most perfect health, nor did I construe these signs except into the fact of his being absent from his new-found, his endeared and delighting home. He left us so suddenly that I was only just in time to see him off. He would not permit me to accompany him to London, from whence he should instantly embark ; but it was a letter from Clara that really hastened his departure—his babes were ill. I could not gain from him the least idea of their affection, nor whether there was cause for fear—his face expressed alarm, but had an unutterable look besides ; a look which certainly astounded me, for it might have bespoken indifference, and it might bespeak despair. One smile I caught as he departed that was neither indifferent nor desolate ; it wrung my heart with happiness to reflect that smile had been for me.

The feeling I had for those unknown babies was inexplicable after he was fairly gone. That I should have loved them, though unseen, was scarcely strange, for they were the offspring of the two I loved best on earth ; but I longed and lan-

guished for one glimpse of their baby faces, just in proportion to the haunting certainty which clutched me, that those baby faces I should never see. Their beauty had been Seraphael's only inspiration when, in conversation with me, he had fully seemed himself; the one so light and clear, with eyes as the blue of midnight—his brow, her eyes; the other soft and roseate, with her angel forehead and his own star-like gaze;—her smile upon them both, and the features both of him. As one who reads of the slaughtered darlings in the days of Herod—as one who pores on chronicles of the cradle plague-smitten—I felt for them; they seemed never to have been born, to me.

Oh! that they had never been born indeed! at least there was one while I thought so. We had a heart-rending letter from Clara, one fortnight after her lord returned to her; the twins were both dead, and by that time buried in the same grave! With her pure self-forgetfulness where another suffered, she spoke no word of her own sorrow, but she could not conceal from us how fearfully the blow had fallen upon him. The little she said made us

all draw close together and tremble with an emotion we could not confess. But the letter concluded with an assurance of his supreme and undaunted intention, undisturbed by the shocks and agonies of unexpected woe, to undertake the conductorship of the Festival. The sorrow that now shadowed expectations which had been too bright tempered also our joy, too keen till then. But after a week or two, when we received no further tidings, we began absolutely to expect him; and with a stronger anticipation, infatuation, than ever, built upon a future which no man may dare to call his own, either for good or evil. The hottest summer I had ever known interfered not with the industry alike of band and chorus. The intense beauty of the music and its marvellous embodiments had fascinated the very country far and wide; it was as if Art stood still, and waited even for him who had magnified her above the trumpety standards of her precedented progress.

We were daily expecting a significant assurance that he was on our very shores; I was myself beginning to tremble in the air of sorrow that must

necessarily surround them both, himself and his companion, when, one morning—I forget the date ; may I never remember it !—I was reflecting upon the contents of a paper which Davy took in every week, a chronicle of musical events, which I ransacked conscientiously, though it was seldom much to the purpose. Strangely enough I had been reading of the success of another friend of mine—even Laura, who had not denied herself the privilege of artist-masonry after all, for she was dancing amidst flowers and fairy elements, and I was determining I would, at the first possible opportunity, go to see her. Then I considered I should like her to come to the Festival ; and was making up a letter of requests to my ever-generous friend, Miss Lawrence, that she might bring Laura, as I knew she would be willing : when a letter came for me, was brought by an unconscious servant, and laid between my hands. It was in Clara's writing, once again ; I was coward enough to spare myself a few moments ; there was no one in the room ; I was just on the wing to my band, but I could not help still sparing myself a little, and a very little longer.

I believe I knew as well what was in the letter as if I had opened it, before I broke the seal. I believe terror and intense presentiment lent me that stillness and steadiness of perception which are the very empyrean of sorrow. Enough! I opened it at last, and found it exactly as I had expected: Seraphael himself was ill. The hurry and trouble of the letter induced me to believe there was more behind her words than in them, mournful and unsatisfactory as they were. He was, as he believed himself to be, overwrought; and though he considered himself in no peril, he must have quiet. This struck me most; it was all over if he felt he must have quiet. But the stunning point was, that he deputed his friend Lenhart Davy to the conductorship of his own works, the concerts all being arranged by himself in preparation, and nothing but a director being required. Clara concluded by asking me to come to her if I could. She did not say he wished to see me, but I knew she wished to see me herself, and even for his sake, that call was enough for me.

My duties, my intentions, all lay in the dust. I

considered but how to make way thither, with the speed that one fain would change to wind, to lightning, or yoke to them as steeds. I packed up nothing, nor did I leave a single trace of myself behind, except Clara's letter, and a postscript, in pencil, of my own. I was in my mother's house when the letter came upon me; and flying past Davy's on my way to the railroad, I saw Millicent with Carlotta looking out of one of the windows, all framed in roses: it was a sight I merely recall as we recall touches of pathos to medicine us for deeper sorrow. Two days and nights I travelled incessantly, without information or help, solitary as a pilgrim who is wandering from home to Heaven; it could be nothing else I knew. The burning, glowing summer—the tossing forests—the cornfields yet unravished—the glory on the crested lime-trees—the vines smothering rock and wall and terrace with fruit of life—all these I saw and many other dreams as a dream myself I passed. I only know I seemed taking the whole world; so wide the scattered sensations spread themselves that I dared not call home to myself, for they did

but minister to the perfect appreciation that what I dreamed was true, and what I yearned to clasp as truth, a dream.

The city of his home was before me—but how can I call it a city? It was a nest itself in a nest of hills. Below the river rushed, its music ever in a sleep, and its blue waves softened hyaline by distance. In the last sunset smile I saw the river and the valley—the vines at hand crawled over it, and there was not a house around that was not veiled in flowers. When I entered the valley from below, the purple evening had drowned the sunset as with a sea—there was no mist nor cloud, the starlight was all pure, it brightened moment by moment; and having hurried all along till now, at length I rested. For now I felt, that of all I had ever endured, the approaching crisis was the consummation. Had I dared, I would have returned; for I even desired not to advance: my own utter impotence, my unavailing presence, weighed me down, and the might of my passion insphered me as did that distant starlight—I was as nothing to itself. I had shed no tears. Tears I have ever

found the springs of gladness, and grief most dry ; but who could weep in that breathless expectation ? who would not, when he cannot, rejoice to weep ? Brighter than I had ever seen them, the stars shone on me ; and brighter and brighter they seemed to burn through the crystal clarity of my perception ; my ear felt open—I heard sounds born of silence, which indeed were no sounds, but *themselves* silence. I saw the unknown, which, indeed, could not be seen ; and thus I waited, suspended in the midst of time ; yearning for some Heaven to open, and take me in. Whatever air stirred was soft as the pulse of sleep ; whatever sigh it carried was a sigh of flowers, late summer sweetness, first autumn sadness, poured into faint embrace. I saw the church-tower in the valley, it reached me as a dream ; all was a dream around about ; the dark shade of the terraced houses, their shadier trees ; and I myself the dreamer, to whom those stars above, those heights so unimaginable, were the only waking day. At midnight I had not moved ; and at midnight I dreamed another dream, still standing there

The midnight hour had struck, and died along the valley into the quiet, when a sudden gathering gleam behind a distant rock rose like a red moonlight, and tinged the very sky. But there was no moon, and I felt afraid, and child-like. I was obliged to watch, to ascertain. It grew into a glare, that gleam ; the glare of fire—and slowly, stilly as even in a dream indeed, wound about the rock and passed down along the valley a dark procession, bearing torches, with a darker in the midst of them than they.

Down the valley to the church they came—I knew they were for resting there. No bell caught up the silence, I heard no tramp of feet, they might have been spirits for all the sound they made—and when at last they paused beneath me in the night, the torches streamed all steadily, and rained their flaming smiles upon the imagery in the midst.

That bier was carried proudly, as of a warrior called from deadly strife to death's own sleep. But not as warrior's its ornaments—its crown. The velvet folds passed dark into the dark grass as they

paused, as storm-clouds rolling softly, as gloom itself at rest. But above, from the face of the bier the darkness fled away—it was covered with a mask of flowers. Wreath within wreath lay there—hue within hue, from virgin white and hopeful azure to the youngest blush of love. And in the very midst, next the pale roses and their tender green, a garland of the deepest crimson glowed; leafless, brilliant, vivid—the full petals, the orb-like glory, gave out such splendours to the flame-light, that the fresh first youth's blood of a dauntless heart was alone the suggestion of its symbol. Keenly in the distance the clear vision, the blaze of softness, reached me—I stirred not, I rushed not forwards—I joined in the dread feast afar. I stood as between the living and the dead; the dead below—the living with the stars above; and the plague of my heart was stayed.

I waited until the bier, bare of its gentle burden, stood lonely by the grave. I waited until the wreaths, flung in, covered the treasure with their kisses, that was a jewel for earth to hide. I saw the torches thrown into the abyss, quenched by

the kisses of the flowers ; even as the earthly joy, the beauty had been quenched in that abyss of light which to us is only darkness. I watched the black shadows draw closer round the grave—one suffocating cry arose, as if all hearts were broken in that spasm, or as if Music herself had given up the ghost. *But Music never dies.* In reply to that sickening shout, as if, indeed, a heaven opened to receive me ; a burst, a peal—a shock of transcendent music—fell from some distant height. I saw no sign the while I heard ; nor was it a mourning strain. Triumphant, jubilant, sublime in seraph sweetness, joy immortal, it mingled into the arms of night. While yet its echoes rang, another strain made way—came forth to meet it—and melted into its embrace ; as jubilant, as blissful ; but farther, fainter, more ineffable. Again it yielded to the echoes ; but above those echoes swelled another, a softer,—and yet another and a softer voice that was but the mingling of many voices, now far and far away. Distantly, dyingly, till death drank distance up, the music wandered ; and at length, when the mystic spell was broken and I

could hear no more, I could only believe it still went on and on, sounding through all the earth, beyond my ear ; and rising up to Heaven, from shores of lands untraversed as that country beyond the grave ! All peace came there upon me—as a waveless deep it welled up and upwards from my spirit, till I dared no longer sorrow ; my love was dispossessed of fear, and the demon Despair, exorcised, fled as one who wept, and fain would hide his weeping. And yet that hope, if hope it could be that cooled my heart and cheered my spirit, was not a hope of earth. My faith had fled as an angel into the light, and that hope alone stayed by me.

It was not until the next morning and then not early, that I visited that house, and the spirit now within it whose living voice had called me thither. No longer timidly, if most tenderly, I advanced along the valley, past the church which guarded now the spot on all this earth the most like Heaven ; and found the mansion now untenanted that Heaven itself had robbed. Quiet, stillness—not as of death, but most like new-born wonder—pos-

sessed that house. The overhanging balconies, the sunburst on the garden, the fresh carnations, the carved gateway, the shaded windows, and over all the cloudless sky, and around all that breathed and lived :—it was a lay beyond all poetry, and such a melancholy may never music utter ! Thoné took me in, and I believe she had waited for me at the door : she spoke not, and I spoke not ; she led me only forwards with the air of one who feels all words are lost between those who understand but cannot benefit each other. She led me to a room in which she left me ; but I was not to be alone. I saw Clara instantly—she came to meet me from the window, unchanged as the summerland without by the tension or the touch of trouble. I could not possibly believe, as I saw her, and seeing her, felt my courage flow back, my life resume its current ; that she had ever really suffered. Her face so calm, was not pale ; her eye so clear, was tearless. Nor was there that writhing smile about her lovely lips that is more agonizing than any tears. It was entirely in vain I tried to speak—had she required comfort my words would have

thronged at my will ; but if any there required comfort, it could not be herself. Seeing my fearful agitation, which would work through all my silence, her sweet voice startled me ; I listened as to an angel, or as to an angel I should never have listened.

“If I had known how it would be, I would never have been so rash as to send for you. But he was so strange—for he did not suffer—that I could not think he was going to die. I do not call it dying, nor would you if you had seen it. I wish I could make that darling feel such death was better than to live.”

I put a constraint upon myself which no other presence could have brought me to exhibit.

“What darling, then?” said I, for I could only think of one, who was darling as well as king.

“Poor Starwood—but you will be able to comfort him—you are the only person who could.”

“Perhaps it would not be kind to comfort him,—perhaps he would rather suffer. But I will do my best to please you. Where is he now?”

“ I will bring him ;” and she left the room.

In another moment all through the sunny light, that despite the shaded windows streamed through the very shade, she entered again with Starwood. He flew at me and sank upon the ground. I have seen women—many—weep, and some few men, but I have never seen, and may I never see ! such weeping as he wept. Tears—as if tropic rains should drench our northern gardens—seemed dissolving with his very life his gentle temperament. I could not rouse nor raise him. His sodden hair ; his hands, as damp as death ; his dreadful sobs ; his moans of misery ; his very crushed and helpless attitude : appealed to me not in vain, for I felt at once it was the only thing to do for him that he should be suffered to weep till he was satisfied, or till he could weep no more. And yet his tears provoked not mine, but rather drove them inwards, and froze them to my heart. Nor did Clara weep, but I could not absolutely say whether she had already wept or not—for, where other eyes grow dim, hers grew only brighter ; and weeping—had she wept—had only cleared

her Heaven. We sat for hours in that room together—that fair but dreadful room! its brilliant furniture unworn, its frescos delicate as any dream; its busts, its pictures crowding calm lights and glorious colours, all fresh as the face of Nature, with home upon its every look: save only where the organ towered, and muffling in dark velvet its keys and pipes, reminded us that music had left home for Heaven, and we might no more find it there!

And again it was longed-for evening, the twilight tarried not. It crept—it came—it fell upon the death-struck woeful valley. Oh blessed hour!—the repose alike of passion and of grief! Oh blessed Heaven! to have softened the mystic change from day to darkness so that we can bear them both!—never so blessed as when the broken-hearted seek thy twilights and find refreshment in thy shades! At that very hour, we two alone stood together by the glorious grave. For the first time, as the sun descended, Starwood had left off weeping; I had myself put him in his bed, and rested beside him till he was asleep; then I had

returned to Clara. She was wrapped in black, waiting for me ; we went together, without speaking, without signifying our intentions to each other, but we both took the same way, and stood, where I have said, together ; and when we had kissed the ground she spoke. She had not spoken all the day—most grave and serious had been her air—she yet looked more as a child that had lost its father than a widowed wife—as if she had never been married, she struck me ; an almost virgin air possessed her, an unserene reserve, for now her accents faltered.

“I could not say to you till we were alone,” she said, “and we could not be alone to-day, how much I thank you for coming ; so many persons are to be here in a day or two, and I wish to consult with you.”

“I will see them all for you, I will arrange everything ; but you are not going away ?”

“Going away ? and you to say so, too ! I will never leave this place until I die !”

“You loved him, then, thank God !”

"Loved him! shall I tell you how? You know best what it was to love him, for you loved him best! Better than I did, and yet I loved him with all love. Do I look older, and more like this world, or less?"

She smiled with a sweet significance—a smile she had learned from him.

"I have been thinking how young you look—too young almost. You are so fresh, so child-like, and, may I say it? so fair."

"You may say anything. I think I have grown fairer myself. Very strange to confess, is it? But you are my friend, to you I should confess anything. I have been with a spirit-angel—no wonder I am fresh. I have been in Heaven—no wonder I am fair. I felt myself grow better, hour by hour. After I left you with him—when his arms were round me; when he kissed me; when his tenderness oppressed me—I felt raised to God. No heart ever was so pure, so overflowing with the light of Heaven. I can only believe I have been in Heaven, and have fallen here; not that he has

left me, and I must follow him to find him. I will not follow yet, my friend ! I have much to do that he has left me."

"Thank God ! you will not leave us ! but more, because you loved him, and made him happy."

"You do not perhaps know that he was never anything but happy. When I think of discontent and envy, and hatred and anger, and care, and see them painted upon other faces, I feel that he must have tasted Heaven to have made himself so happy here. I can fancy a single taste of Heaven, Sir, lasting a whole life long."

She was his taste of Heaven, as a foretaste even to me ! But had she indeed never learned the secret of his memory ? or had she turned, indeed, its darkness into light.†

"I wish to hear about the last."

"You know nearly as much as I do, or as I can tell you. You remember the music you heard last night ? It was the last he wrote, and I found it, and saved it, and had done with it what you heard."

But I cannot descant on death-beds ; it is the only theme which I dare believe, if I were to touch, would scare me at my dying hour. I will not tamper with those scenes, but console myself by reminding, that if the time had been, and that too lately, when upon that brain fell the light in fever and the sun in fire, the time was over ; and sightless—painless—deaf to the farewells of dying music—he indeed could not be said to *suffer* death.

Nor did he *know*, to suffer it, as he had said. The crown, that piercing with its *fiery thorns* unfelt, had pressed into his brow the death-sting, should also crown with its *star-flowers* the waking unto life. * * * * *

“ You remember what you said, Mr. Auchester, that he needed a ‘ companion for his earthly hours.’ I tried to be his companion—he allowed me to be so ; and one of the last times he spoke, he said, ‘ Thank Carl for giving you to me.’ ”

That echo reaches me from the summer-night of sadness and still communion : of *passion's*

slumber by the dead. It is now some years ago, but never was any love so fresh to the spirit it enchanted, as is the enchantment of this sorrow, still mine own. So be it ever mine, till all shall be for ever !

I am in England, and again at home. Great changes have swept the earth ; I know of none within myself. Through all convulsions the music whispers to me *that music is*. I ought to believe in its existence, for it is my own life, and the life of the living round me. Davy is still at work, but not alone in hope ; sometimes in the midst of triumph. They tell me I shall never grow rich, but with my violin I shall never be poor. I have more than enough for everything, as far as I myself am concerned ; and as for those I love, there is not one who prospers not, even by means of music.

Starwood has been three years in London. His name, enfolded in another name, brought the whole force of music to his feet. It is not easy to procure lessons of the young professor, who can

only afford twenty minutes to the most exacting pupil. It is still less easy to hear him play in public; for he has a will of his own, and will only play what he likes, and only what he likes to the people he likes; for he is a bit of a cynic, and does not believe half so much as I do, that music is making way. He married his first feminine pupil—a girl of almost fabulous beauty. I believe he gave her half-a-dozen lessons before the crisis, not any afterwards; and I know that he was seventeen and she fifteen years of age, at the time they married. His whole nature is spent upon her, but she is kind enough to like me, and thus I sometimes receive an invitation, which I should accept did they reside in the moon.

But I have other London friends. After two seasons, more satisfactory than brilliant, Laura retired from the stage. During the time she danced, her name was scarcely whispered, I believe she was even feared in her spiritual exaltation of her art; but no sooner had she left the lights than all critics and contemporaries discovered her excellences. She was wooed with the white-flower

garlands of the purest honour, with the gold so few despise, to return and resume her career, now certain fame ; but she was never won, and I have since made clear to myself that she only danced in public until she had raised a certain capital, for you will only find her now in her graceful drawing-room where London is most secluded, surrounded by the most graceful and loveliest of the children of the peerage. No one but Mlle. Lauretta—her stage and professional name—prepares the little rarities for transplantation into the Court-garden, or rehearses the quadrille for the Prince of Wales's birthnight-ball. I believe Miss Lemark, as she is known still to me, or even Laura, might have had many homes if she had chosen—homes where she could not but have felt at home. Clara was even importunate that she should live with her in Germany. Miss Lawrence was excessively indignant at being refused herself—and there have been worthy gentlemen, shades not to be invoked or recognized, who would have been very thankful to be allowed to dream of that pale brow veiled, those clear eyes downcast, those tapering fingers

twined in theirs:—but Laura, like myself, will *never* marry.

For Miss Lawrence, too, that glorious friend of mine, I must have a little corner. It was Miss Lawrence who carried to Laura the news of Seraphael's death—herself heart-broken, who bound up that bleeding heart. It is Miss Lawrence, whose secretive and peculiar generosity so permeates the heart of music in London, that no true musician is ever actually poor. It is Miss Lawrence, who, disdaining subscription-lists, steps unseen through every embarrassment where those languish who are too proud or too humble to complain, and leaves that behind her which re-assures and re-establishes, by the magic of charity, strewn from her artist-hand. It is Miss Lawrence who discerns the temporality of art to be that which is as inevitable as its spiritual necessity; who yet ministers to its uttermost spiritual appreciation by her patronage of the highest only. It is Miss Lawrence you see, wherever music is to be heard, with her noble brow and sublimely beneficent eyes, her careless costume, and music-beaming lips; but

you cannot know, as I do, what it is to have her for a friend.

Miss Lawrence certainly lost caste by receiving and entertaining as she did Mlle. Lauretta, for both when Laura was dancing before the public and had done with so dancing, Miss Lawrence would insist upon her appearing at every party or assembly she gave, whether with her father's sanction or without, nobody knew. To be introduced to a ballet-girl, or even a dancing-lady, at the same table or upon the same carpet with barristers and baronets, with golden-hearted bankers, and "earnest" men of letters!—she certainly lost caste by her resolute unconventionalism, did my friend Miss Lawrence! But then, as she said to me, "What in life does it matter about losing caste with people who have no caste to lose?" She writes to me continually, and her house is my home in London. I have never been able to make her confess that she sent me my violin; but I know she did, for her interest in me can only be explained on that ground, and there is that look upon her face, whenever I play, which

assures me of something associated in her mind and memory with my playing that is not itself music.

Miss Lawrence also corresponds with Clara; and Clara sees us too, but no one, seeing her, would believe her to be childless and alone; she is more beautiful than ever, and not less calm—more loving and more beloved.

We had Florimond Anastase, a concert-player, at our very last festival. He was exactly like the young Anastase who taught me, and I should not have been able to believe him older but for his companion, a young lady, who sat below him in the audience, and at whom I could only gaze. It was Josephine Cerinthia, no longer a child, but still a prodigy, for she has the finest voice, it is said, in Europe: no one will hear it however, for Anastase, who adopted her eight years ago, makes her life the life of a princess, or as very few princesses' can be; he works for her, he saves for her, and has already made her rich. They say he will marry her by and by; it may be so, but I do not myself believe it.



Near the house in which Seraphael died, and rising as from the ashes of his tomb, is another house which holds his name, and will ever hold it to be immortal. Sons and daughters of his own are there—of his land, his race, his genius—those whom music has “called” and “chosen” from the children of humanity. The grandeur of the institution—its stupendous scale, its intention, its consummation,—afford, to the imagination that enshrines him, the only monument that would not insult his name. Nor is that temple without its priestess—that altar without its angel. She who devoted the wealth of his wisdom to that work gave up the treasure of her life besides, and has consecrated herself to its superintendence. At the Monumental School she would be adored but that she is too much loved as children love—too much at home there to be feared. I hold her as my passion for ever; she makes my old years young in memory, and to every new morning of my life her name is Music. With another name—not dearer, but as dear—she is indissolubly connected; and if I preserve my heart’s first purity, it is to them I owe it.

I write no more. Had I desired to treat of Music specifically, I should not have written at all ; for that theme demands a tongue beyond the tongues of men and angels—a voice that is no more heard. But if one faithful spirit find an echo in my expression, to his beating heart for music, his inward song of praise, it is not in vain that I write, that what I have written is written.

CHARLES AUCHESTER.

THE END.

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working hard and always. But with it all kept her health, like the angels in Heaven, and grew ill and weak. I could not dance then, I felt it to be impossible, though sometimes it came upon me that I could ; and then the remembrance of those nights, all alike, night after night—I could not. Pray tell me now whether I am not worthless. But I have no beauty ; I am lost.”

“ Miss Lemark, if you were really lost, and had no beauty, it appears to me that you would not complain about it ; people do not, I assure you who are ugly or in despair. You are overdone, and you overrate your little girlish follies ; everything is touched by the colour of your thought, but is not really what it seems. Believe me—as I cannot but believe—that your inaction arose from a morbid feeling, and not too strong health ; not from true want of energy or courage. You are young, a great deal too young to trust all your fancy, or even feel ; and you ought to be thankful that there is nothing more for you to regret than the weighing down your spirit. You will do everything we expect and wish when you become



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